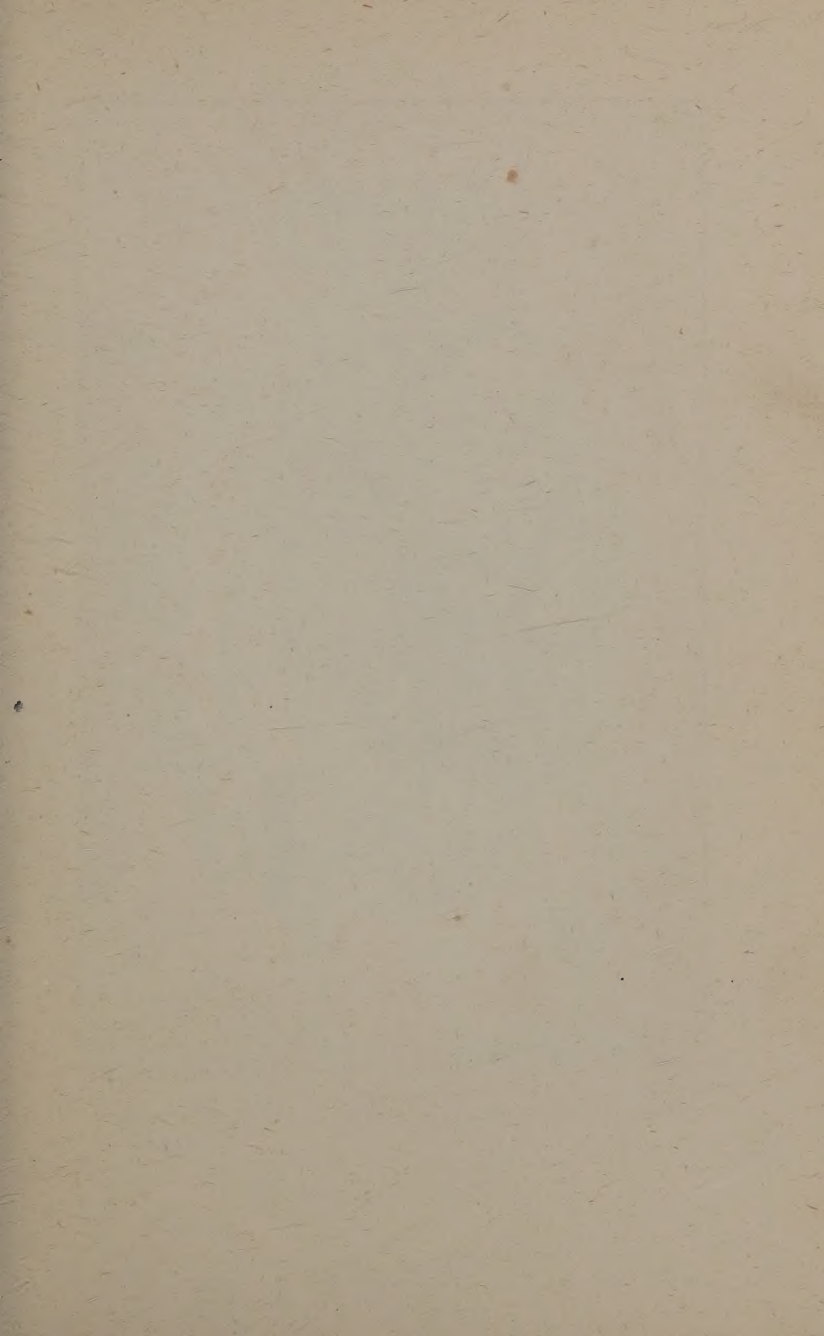




For
PREY
and
SPOILS
By F. A. OBER

FOR PREY AND SPOILS
OR THE BOY BUCCANEER





Frontispiece—For Prey and Spoils.

"AND SO THIS IS YOUR NEPHEW, CAPTAIN BRABAZON?"

See p. 37.

For Prey and Spoils

OR THE BOY BUCCANEER

by

Frederick A. Ober

Author of "TOMMY FOSTER'S ADVENTURES,"
"MONTEZUMA'S GOLD MINES," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

HENRY ALTEMUS COMPANY
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INTRODUCTORY

IT was Mr. Ober's intimate acquaintance with the West Indies that captivated the aged custodian of the Castillo del Mar, and caused him to entrust to the American the original manuscript from which the following story has been evolved.

The heart of the Spaniard warmed to his chance acquaintance. He insisted upon his lodging in the castle; and one night, after the evening repast was ended, he drew forth from a chest in a remote corner of the banquet-hall two bundles of papers.

"Here, señor," he said, "are manuscripts that came down to me from an ancestor who visited the West Indies in the early period of Spanish colonization in the Americas. They are in a foreign language, and there lingers a tradition in our family declaring that whosoever shall first translate them shall become their possessor. Although valuable—so runs the tradition—no man of our line has yet been able to read them. In the providence of God it would seem that

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thou art the man, and that I, the last of my family, am to receive the knowledge of what they contain."

The papers were found to comprise two separate stories of adventure, written in the quaint English of more than two hundred years ago. They were entitled "Humphrey Gilbert: his Adventures in Youth" and "His Adventures in ye latter Period of his Life." The first named is herewith presented under the title of "For Prey and Spoils, or the Boy Buccaneer."

The manuscripts could not have fallen into better hands. Mr. Ober is the best living authority on Spanish America, and has been a daring and adventurous traveler. Every island bathed in the "eternal Carib summer" is familiar to him, and he has repeatedly visited the haunts of the swashbuckling freebooters of whom he now writes.

Mr. Ober's book is a distinct contribution to literature. He has written it in the sinewy style that boys like. He sprays them with buccaneering activities, adventures and hair-breadth escapes, until the most exacting of his readers cannot fail to be satisfied.

THE PUBLISHERS.

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FOR PREY AND SPOILS

CHAPTER I

THE SEA-KINGS' HOME

MAYHAP it matters not where I was born, for now it concerns me most where I shall die; but still, since my tale must have a beginning, let me state that my eyes first opened to the light in an English manor-house, on the right bank of the river Dart, in Devonshire. The fair farm itself had come down through many generations to my father, who, dying when I was an infant, left it to my elder brother, as by right indeed he should have done.

But the estate being poor of soil, though beautiful of aspect withal, fell short of affording support to us all, e'en though there were but

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few, to wit—my mother, my elder brother, his wife and babe, and myself. Perhaps it were better to say that the chief difficulty lay in providing meet employment for myself as I grew old enough to work with my hands, for my mother, though poor, was yet ambitious that I should do something better than labor on a farm. So it fell out that when, on or near my fifteenth birthday, my mother's brother, a mariner engaged in trade with the Indies, proposed to take me out with him as a cabin-boy, he found not so much opposition as he had expected. For my dear mother, more thoughtful for my future than I, looked forward to the time when I should return perchance with a fortune, and thus be able to spend the remainder of our days each in the other's company. Careless was I of the future, yet my uncle's offer seemed to me like a golden opportunity, and I grasped at it eagerly.

Aside from the promise in it of great adventure, and perchance of profit in the end, there was that in the opportunity which appealed to

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my romantic nature, for in my veins coursed the blood of the sea-kings of Devon. The sea air had always been my breath and the sea-salt was in the wood we burned on our hearth. And besides, were not all the traditions of Devonshire smacking of the sea, of the great oceans which had been found and crossed by our mariners? Was not the greatest of sea-kings, Sir Francis Drake, a son of old Devon, and Sir John Hawkins (though I admired not his life so much as that of Drake, the sea-scurge of the Spaniards), and that knight of purest faith, Sir Humphrey Gilbert—yes, and Walter Raleigh and Blake? And had not my mother once taken me to see the Plymouth Hoe, where Drake, and Howard, and those other commanders who drove the Spanish armada to destruction, whiled away their time of waiting playing at bowls?

And my grandsire, who died but a few years before this time of which I tell, had himself seen, with his own eyes, despairing Raleigh return from his last American voyage in the "Destiny,"

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enter the harbor of Plymouth, and thence depart for London and for the Tower, where he was beheaded. Despairing he was, my grandsire said, yet high-hearted and even gay of demeanor, when he landed at the mole ; as when, later, reproved for his seeming levity, he saith : “ It is my last mirth in this world ; begrudge it not to me ! ”

When I spake of these worthies to my dear mother, and said it seemed more fit to live like them, even to die like Sir Walter, than to burrow in the earth like a mole, she did not say me nay. She smiled, e'en though through her tears, and saith to me : “ Yea, my son, and, perchance, you may remember that my father, your grandsire, also saw that band of noble men and women depart from Devon Port for America in the ‘ Mayflower,’ and saw them not only, but kissed their hands at the parting. For he himself was always prone to go to that land, America, to which, in the year 1620, sailed those seekers

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for religious freedom, leaving behind them their most dear homes and friends."

Sweet voice my sainted mother had, but she was chary of words; and her beauty was of that sort that made men turn and look at her when she passed. To me it was the beauty of angels; to me her voice seemed no less than heavenly music; and have I not heard it many, many times in the years that have passed, warning, beseeching when I was sore beset by peril and temptation? Ah, me, yes; but in imagination only, and in dreams; for since I sailed forth from the Dart's Mouth, in the year 1668—my mother having yielded her love to her judgment, as she then had light—I have never heard her voice, in sooth, nor looked upon her face. She clung to me, weeping, and strained me to her breast full oft in those last few days we had together; but, at the end, when my uncle came for me and his men took my sailor's chest to the pinnacle at the shore, she sent me forth most bravely. "Forget not, love," she said, "to always

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hold thy God and thy mother in remembrance. I believe, with Devon's sainted son, that we are as near to heaven by sea as by land." And thus, with her kiss warm upon my lips, and with the last words of my great namesake, likewise the last I ever heard her speak, I, Humphrey Gilbert, fared forth to seek my fortune in the Indies.

The slopes and terraces of the Port faded from view late in the afternoon, and by nightfall we were far off from shore, making out for the open sea. Nothing occurred to interrupt the steady sailing of our vessel on her course—nothing but occasional squalls and head winds; for the "Nancy" was a good ship and staunch, built expressly for the long voyages to and fro between Plymouth and Barbadoes, in the West Indies, to which latter port we were destined. But, while man proposeth, the God of all disposeth, the proverb sayeth, the truth of which we were perforce to prove. For, while we thought we were destined for the Barbadoes, my uncle

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having already sailed several voyages thither, the fates had in store for us something quite otherwise, as soon will appear.

In the hold of the “Nancy” was great store of mixed goods for traffic with the natives of the Leeward Isles; perchance, we should meet up with them, and in her treasure tank, just off the cabin, where my uncle, the master, the mate and myself had our quarters when below, was the sum of fifty thousand pounds in silver and gold, for the purpose of buying sugar and molasses from the planters of the Barbadoes. It was not generally known to the crew that this treasure was aboard, though all may have surmised it from the very fact of the voyage being made. If, however, any knew of it, they kept close with the information, not bruiting it about.

The crew was composed of Devon men and boys, some going out, like myself, in the hope of mending their fortune, and others being mere sailors who made their bread by seafaring toil. All told, they were about sixteen in number, in-

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cluding four apprentices, or, in plain truth, slaves, who were being transported to the islands under lifelong indentures for some petty crimes they had committed. They may have been under false accusation, or may have done all that was imputed to them; I troubled not myself about them; in which I often thought afterwards I was wrong, for I should have given them of my sympathy, if nothing more. This reflection arose from the fact that not long after I was myself in their condition—a slave, though not owing to any crime I had committed—and then I felt the need and craving for human sympathy, but when too late.

My uncle was kind; the work I had assigned me was light, and the days passed pleasantly, except that constantly I was thinking of my mother, which thoughts were gladsome in themselves, but also saddening. Nothing occurred to vary the monotony of the voyage for weeks, not even a sail rose against the horizon, until I felt that anything were welcome, even a hurricane,

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for the sake of a change. This shows the foolishness contained in the heart of a youth of fifteen, for, while my uncle, the master, was content that nothing untoward happened, I was craving some excitement.

“Nay, nay,” he was wont to say, with a shake of his gray head, “let well enough alone. I want nothing but fair winds—which we have in the main, and fair fortune, which may the good God grant us—to escape the pirates of the Main.”

We were then down near the latitude of the northern West Indies, and in waters which the king of Spain had long claimed as exclusively his own. Near one hundred and eighty years before Don Christopher Columbus had discovered this portion of the world, sailing in vessels furnished by the Spanish crown, and ever since the Spaniards had held that almost all the Western hemisphere belonged to them. The king of France, and after him the king of England, had in effect asked the king of Spain to show

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them the title-deeds he had received to all these seas, lands and peoples from our common father, Adam. He could not, of course ; so now it was a question of which could seize and hold the most of sea and shore.

As the king of Spain was most strongly intrenched in the places conquered in former times by the Spanish soldiers, and held ever since, there was little to do, my uncle said, but prey upon his commerce. This our brave privateers, like Hawkins, Davis, Drake and Raleigh, had done in the last century ; but we all know the end of Sir Walter, who lost his head because King James would not answer to the Spanish crown for his deeds. It was easier to take off Raleigh's head than to pay for his privateering, my uncle said, and he was very well informed in state affairs.

After which, finding that the king of Spain grew more exacting as his commerce increased, and that all the heads of all the noblemen in England would not satisfy his thirst for blood, our British merchant mariners took matters into

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their own hands and worried his Spanish majesty until he fell sick with fear. Not alone English, but Dutch and French seafarers took out letters of marque and privateering against the hated flag of Spain.

“That was all very well,” said my uncle, “so long as the privateers confined their attentions to the Jack Spaniards; but of late some of them have in effect run up the black flag, and are doing nothing more nor less than piracy. Even the ‘blood and bones’ of old Britain will not save us, peradventure one of those rascally Frenchmen or Dutchmen gets a squint at us before we make port and swap our gold and silver for freight that is not so easily handled. Methinks it would have been better if I had taken my gold to the Guinea coast, there exchanged it for a cargo of lusty blackamoors, and then have come to the Barbadoes for my sweets. Then there would have been no gold to tempt the pirates, and I fancy we might escape their clutches.”

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“ Might escape ! ” I exclaimed. “ Why, is there any doubt—any danger ? ” This conversation occurred one day when we were within four or five days’ sail of the Barbadoes, which we might even then have reached had we not borne a more northerly course for the Leeward Islands.

“ Yes, there is not only doubt of our being able to escape the pirates, but there is danger,” rejoined the bluff old sailor. “ You see, Humphrey, we have n’t a gun aboard, not even a demi culverin, and, though I have a Briton’s distaste for surrender, and would rather fight than run, there is no alternative.”

“ But why do either ? ” I asked, in amazement.

For answer my uncle handed me his telescopic glass, which, treasuring as the apple of his eye, he rarely allowed anyone but himself to use. “ Sweep her down near the horizon in the no’theast,” he whispered, so that none of the crew could overhear him. “ See that fellow hull down in the distance : a frigate, near as I can make

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out. He has been following us for the last three days, and to-morrow I expect him to catch up. He might have done it two days ago ; but so long as we are going his way, like a hare towards the fox's den, he won't overhaul us. If he will give me only two days more, we can make Saint Kitts, and then I'll snap my fingers in his face. But he won't. No"—in answer to my questioning look—"he's a French privateer, a fast one, and can make better time than our 'Nancy.'"

And the next day, surely as dawn broke, the frigate was within hail, with a Long Tom trained to rake us at a shift of the helm, and fifty or more villainous cutthroats crowded against the lee rail ready to board, should it come to close quarters.

I entertained hard thoughts of my uncle for allowing that French corsair to take us without a fight, as he did ; but time showed that it was not from lack of spirit, but in furtherance of a deep-laid scheme. The mate was ready to take him by the throat, and the crew growled them-

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selves hoarse ; but of what use ? A few muskets and arquebuses formed our total armament, together with some pistols and cutlasses ; and what were these against that corsair's grinning row of portholes and grim cannon, let alone his decks swarming with bloodthirsty pirates armed to the teeth ?

CHAPTER II

CAPTURED BY CORSAIRS

WE were going quite slowly, for the morning breeze in those seas is but mild, sometimes dying away altogether soon after the dawn of day, and, in accordance with orders trumpeted from the frigate by a lusty bo'sen, we came up in the wind and held our vessel steady.

“Send a boat aboard,” shouted the big, bewhiskered pirate, speaking in French, which my uncle well understood.

“Aye, aye, sir,” shouted back our master, also in French. But there was great delay in getting our boat over the side, not only from the manner in which it was secured to the davits, but also owing to the reluctance of our men, who were in

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sooth sullen and seemed like to mutiny. They were of an independent turn, at best, for some of them knew as well as my uncle how to handle a ship, and had only taken passage under him perforce of poverty, brought on belike by drink, which is the curse of seafarers the world over.

So, albeit they made a great to do about the launching of the boat, with a “yo heave ho,” and a “hearty, now my hearties,” and such like, they made such slow progress that the pirate captain became impatient. In sooth, he showed indubitable signs of his wrath by sending a cannon ball skipping but a few yards ahead of our good old “Nancy’s” nose; and the puff of smoke, accompanied by the cataract of water that leaped aboard right merrily, showed what it well behooved our men to do. They needed no second warning, my faith! but with alacrity tumbled the boat into the water, and themselves eftsoon right after it; that is, enough of them to man the oars, the which they had no sooner taken up and shipped than our mate, at a word from

CAPTURED BY CORSAIRS

the master, went also over the side and seated himself in the sheets to steer. He had a scowl on his face, as indeed had every man who sat there facing him and awaiting the word to shove off, which was not long delayed.

There were no orders, as between master and mate, for it was well understood that this was to be a clean breast and no favor. Our papers were straight enough, showing our port of departure and port of destination, also our intent, which was to trade with Britons in a British island. But when, the boat having arrived at the frigate's side, and said papers having been handed up for the pirate chief's inspection, that fierce man stamped and swore and flourished oft his arms about. Then, holding up said papers so that we on the ship could see the nefarious act, he tore them in twain, and threw them overboard.

My uncle saw it all, for he stood on the poop in plain sight. And sooth, he was a majestic figure of a man, with his six feet four of stature,

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and his gray beard flowing e'enmost to his waist. His face was set and stern, his eyes blazing, but he said no word aloud ; though, being near him, I heard him mutter in his beard : " By the king, they shall rue this day and this transaction ! That buccaneer shall hang for this ! "

This might seem but mere bravado to one who knew not my uncle ; and, though I was puzzled to account for his apparent cowardice in giving up our ship without e'en a show of fight, I felt in my soul that he would some time make good his oath, as muttered in his beard to himself ; but at that moment there was that within me which made me almost loathe him for his pusillanimity, as it seemed to me ; though later events showed well what were his motives in allowing our ship to be taken and the pirate chief to insult his majesty the King by thus casting contempt upon official papers with his seal. I fell to trembling with the rage and indignation within me, for it seemed to me far better to die fighting than to suffer indignities at the hands

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of the foreign pirates. I bethought me of my ancestry, and of what Devon's sons had done to the like of this foreigner ; yea, of what this very man, my mother's own brother in blood, and of yore a doughty fighter, had himself performed at sea. It may seem incredible to relate, but my uncle Brabazon had himself fought his ship when on fire to the water's edge, in Blake's glorious battle with the Spaniards off Teneriffe, in 1657, and brought about the great victory for which his admiral received glory and renown. He was with him, too, when he was borne dying home to Plymouth Port.

But now, to suffer us to be taken, like rats in a trap, and perchance to jeopardize our lives through lack of bravery ! He had a hand on my shoulder ; but as these thoughts surged through me I shook it off as it had been a serpent, and, swinging round in front of him, was about to speak my mind, had I died for it. But, ere I opened my mouth, he looked at me so sternly, yet with such a deep tenderness in his

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eyes, that I gazed in wonder—wonder at him for his behavior and at myself for my hesitation.

“I know what thou wouldst say, son Humphrey,” thus he began. “But stay thy impetuous spirit, for thou art wrong, albeit this may seem to thee unaccountable. In the end thou wilt not blame thy uncle for this. More now I cannot say. But wait, have faith in me.”

I had promised my dear mother to be guided by my uncle in all things and to yield him obedience, as I should to my father, were he yet alive; but it went hard against the grain to abide by my promise. We stood, as it were, measuring each the other's mettle, and the gaze of neither flinched. Then he spake again: “Son Humphrey, thou knowest I would not willingly allow harm to come to my sister's son, not to make mention of these others entrusted to my keeping. But hist! here comes the pirates' boat to search the ship. Go thou below and transfer thy most precious belongings to the dunnage sack, for we may have to move!”

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He spake lightly, with seeming unconcern; and, still having faith in him, I obeyed his orders. The few sailors left aboard had already improved their time likewise, and when the rattle of ropes and clatter of cutlasses proclaimed the arrival of visitors on deck every man was ready to depart.

I had lingered over the treasures in the chest that my mother had so lovingly packed for me, fondling the little mementoes that she had slipped in between my clothes, and at the sight of which the tears would come, in spite of me. But the heavy tramp of many feet on deck and the shouts and cursings of the new arrivals hurried me along, and, brushing the tears from my cheeks, I tied the sack's mouth, cast it beneath my bunk, and hastened up the gangway.

I was somewhat prepared for the sight that met my eyes, but not wholly; though I had heard tales oftentimes of these "Brethren of the Sea" from my uncle and others. The dread reality far surpassed all I had heard or imagined,

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and I can hardly express my horror and surprise at sight of the ruffian crew that greeted me as my head appeared above the hatch. They were about a dozen in number, all but one bare of foot and half naked, with shaggy, unkempt heads of shock hair, bushy beards tangled and scraggly, coarse features, and some of them bearing livid scars across cheek or brow. Their garbs were most fantastic, consisting, for the body, of a coarse shirt, open at the throat and belted around the waist, either with a broad leathern band or length of rope, into which was stuck a frightful array of knives, pistols and cutlasses. This waist belt kept up the trousers, which, of every kind of cut and fashion, on some were in tatters below the knee and on others mere apologies for raiment. Their hands were broad and brawny, their legs and chests, where exposed, were covered with coarse hair, and grimy from neglect of ablution.

There was one exception, in the person of the leader of this swashbuckler crew—for so I took

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him to be the moment I saw him—who was dressed with care. He was a man of forty years, or thereabouts—slender, of average height, clad in the uniform of a French captain of the line. Had it not been for a sardonic smile that ever played around his neatly chiselled lips, and the sinister flashing of his eyes, black as sloes and with the divel's light therein, he might eke have passed as handsome. He was girded about like the rest, with pistols thrust into a belt with silver clasps, and on each hip a curving cutlass like to a Moslem cimetar.

He checked the ribald speeches with which his men had greeted (and, I must confess, affrighted) me, and, bowing low, advanced with proffered hand. "And so this is your nephew, Captain Brabazon?" he said, half turning his head, but still advancing with his hand outstretched. "I am glad to make his acquaintance. A fine young man; he—he will soon learn better manners, I venture to say!"

This was said in French, which I understood

very well; and I also understood, from the diabolic smile that flickered into his eyes and around his whiskered lips, that my bearing had offended him. For, carried away by the thought that this man was responsible for our capture—our captor, in very fact—and pursued his nefarious calling from choice, I could not bring myself to take his hand. Take the hand of a pirate, and, perchance, a murderer? Never! never! I would choose to die first! And die, in sooth, I thought I must, right then and there, for hoarse mutterings went up from the throats of his bodyguard, and several of them drew their cutlasses and made at me. But, though he still smiled, in that awful, divelish way, he waved them back with a gesture of command that they obeyed instanter, then delivered himself of the remark with which, as stated, he finished his speech: “He will soon learn better manners, I venture to say!”

Then he turned to my uncle: “Captain Brabazon, that is a fine youth, but a bit brusque,

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don't you think? A little polishing might do him good. Suppose we say, for instance, keel-hauling! After one has been keelhauled, as you know, he is a different man entirely. Then, if he survives that, we will put him through his paces by making him walk the plank. Not to make him walk very far, you know, only from the gunwale to the end of the plank, where a misstep sends him into the water, and then—well, then, I suppose, sharks! Wouldst prefer the sharks' company to mine, young man? Thou hast choice, now. Speak, quickly. Either thou wilt enlist under me on yonder frigate, or overboard thou goest!"

I do not know if I were brave or rash. To be brave is to sell one's life most dearly, daring all things, heeding conscience only and honor. Perhaps I was heeding only stubborn pride, making a punctilio of my detestation of such creatures as these, dead to honor and sordid in sin. No! If that were rashness merely, then knew I not the germ of honesty! I looked at my

uncle, but not in appeal. My heart sank when I thought upon his seeming baseness; but, in a dazed way, I felt curious to see what he would advise me to do. Not that I would follow his advice were it to kneel to the pirate and crave his pardon. I could well spurn one of my kin for that advice. But, no. He was apparently more distressed than was I. He plucked his beard and clenched his right hand as, with dry lips and husky voice, he said: "Come, Captain Mansvelt, do not jest with the youth. Consider, he is but scant fifteen, and this is his first experience at sea. He hath shown pride, I grant, and stubbornness; but pardon him."

Mansvelt! Then this was the most atrocious monster that ever sailed the sea: the Nero of the ocean. His infamies had made him conspicuous even among the men whose crimes had surpassed those of the Spanish conquerors of America. He saw me start, perhaps thought I shuddered, and mistook me for a craven.

"Ha, hast heard the name before, young man?"

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Thou knowest, then, from what I have done, what I can, and belike will, do? No, Captain Brabazon, I am not jesting with the youth. But I will pardon him if he will kneel and kiss my hand. Down, dog, and fawn upon thy master!"

I answered not the wretch, nor did I make a move to do as he commanded. My faith! I could not have done so had the king himself been in his place. Something within me kept me rigid, erect, my gaze fixedly set on his, which now became shifty and uneasy.

"So?" he snarled. "You defy me, Mansvelt, whom to know is either to serve or to detest. Ho, there! Trice this rascal to the rigging. First hamstring him, and try if his knees will bend! But, no, stay"—as several burly ruffians sprang forth to do his bidding—"I have a better plan. Hold him the while I work it out."

CHAPTER III

THE DUEL THAT I FOUGHT

MY condition then seemed forlorn, indeed; but my salvation came from what to many would have appeared an untoward circumstance: to wit, my yielding to a passion that suddenly possessed me. For, when the pirate that was nearest to me laid hands upon my shoulder, he loosened from the chain by which it hung about my neck a portrait of my mother, which burst from the leathern case in which it was contained and fell upon the deck. I had promised her to always carry it about me and to look upon it at least once each day, lest, as she said, I might forget her. It was a miniature, painted by one Van Dyck, a famous Fleming who was once attached to the court of King

Charles. I have understood that he was ranked as among the great masters of the world of art, but of that I know not. Only this I know : that he had met my mother when she was a maiden, for she was a friend of his English wife, Mistress Ruthven, granddaughter of the Earl of Gowrie, whom the painter married but a few years before his death. Be this as it may, he painted the miniature of my mother on ivory, from very love of her beauty, he most gallantly said to her, and then gave it to her as a gift. Meeting my father soon after, she was married, and, of course, bade farewell to the gay life of courts. It was the most precious of her keepsakes, and she had given it to me more as such than (as she had said in playful jest) to remind me of her existence.

From all this may not appear the reason why I burst into a passion. But heed : as it fell to the deck, the coarse fellow sprang and seized it before I could reclaim it, and then held it up for those other villains to see. And, as if that were not enough of insult to bestow upon the fair coun-

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tenance of my dear mother, he passed a ribald jest as to its great beauty, and said that I was full young to carry a woman's portrait concealed about me. It may be supposed that I was at first struck dumb with rage and anguish, that this should have happened to my most prized possession. It seemed, in sooth, a sacrilege most great that my mother's face should have been even gazed upon by those wretches, much the more that it should have provoked unseemly remark.

Perhaps it was wrong; but who knows? I reasoned not as to the consequences, only took notice of the great offence. In my wrath, I saw naught but that precious portrait and the one who held it at arm's length for the jeering pirates to gaze at withal. Yes, I saw one thing else: I saw the hilt of Mansvelt's cimitar hanging loose from his belt, and, snatching it with almost lightning-like rapidity from its scabbard, I sprang upon the one who had ravished me of my keepsake. He was, of course, taken by surprise, and well it was perchance for me, as he was a lusty

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sailor, broad of shoulder and powerful of limb. But of his build I took scant notice, only seeing him, as it were, in a mist; that dearest face in all the world gazing at me appealingly as he held it in his uncouth fingers.

Well, again, was it that his first motion was to pass the portrait to a comrade before rallying to my attack, by the which I caught him a gash on the shoulder ere he could parry my swift blow. He howled with rage and pain, but, when the blood gushed forth, was quick enough to see that though a mere youth I had strength enough in my wrist. He pulled his cutlass forth and was not slow to get back at me with a swinging blow, which I fortunately evaded by stepping to one side.

I really believe I was mad, with a madness of divels, perhaps, but at the same time in my senses sufficiently to make my madness profit me. Never was my sense more keen; never my strength more concentrated in my arms and at points where it would best avail me in this crisis

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of my life. As the clumsy cutlass swept by me I made another thrust, and this time pricked him in the side, so that he yelled again, and with more pain than rage. For it was plain that he had not the courage that suffices for mortal combat, or, if he had, it was fast oozing out. My desperate onslaught had, in the first place, disconcerted him, and, in the second, it had driven him to bay.

Such a brute as he should have taken the offensive; and this I knew instinctively, though reasoning not upon it. And more, I saw that I had the advantage of him in skill, e'en if he had more advantage over me in bulk; and, in my heart, I blessed my good father for inculcating in me this facility with the blade. It was his custom, even when I was a lad—since he died before I was twelve—to cultivate in me a love for the gentleman's weapon, as he called the sword.

“Thou mayest use it some time,” he oft said, “either for thy king or in defense of some lady's

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honor. Then up and at me, child!" The bouts my revered father and myself had together were, so to say, innumerable, for I had a tiny sword as soon as I could toddle, and to thrust and parry were, as I have said, instinctive in me. To learn the sword play is like learning a language: a year in youth is better far than many years in after life.

These, then, were the reasons why I had the man at an advantage. God knows, I do not arrogate aught to myself; nor am I of a quarrelsome disposition. This was the first fight of my life; but, as it went on, I could feel the thirst for conquest take possession of me, the blood rush to my brain, the tightening of the skin of my neck at the roots of the hair, and all those signs that my whole nature was aroused. So, ascribe it not to me or to my prowess, that I gave the poor villain more than he could return.

The fight was not of my seeking, but it soon became evident that it was *my* fight—as the sailors say. It became so evident to the pirate chief-

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tain that he fain would have called a halt, though the signs were not wanting that he exceedingly enjoyed it all the same—as I was afterward told. He called to me, but I was deaf. He yelled to my opponent, but he was unable to evade my blows and cuts. I followed him about the deck; whenever he would fain strike at me I cut him sore, either an upper thrust or straight out or down, as it seemed to me the best thing at the time to do. Ever before my eyes, through it all, was the hand that had held my mother's portrait: the only stranger hand that had ever enclosed it within its fingers. And in my ears sang the words, in my heart surged the impulse: "Strike off that hand! Strike off that hand!"

Blame me not—whoever may read these words of mine now written many years after that event—that I followed the impulse until I had accomplished my dire purpose.

For I did it. Yes. May the good Lord, who alone avengeth, who alone dealeth rewards and

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punishments, forgive me for my intention! But it was not my sane self that did the deed. However, it was done, at the last, and—but I anticipate.

It soon appeared, as I have said, that he had no stomach for the fight, and would have evaded me were it possible. Urged on, however, by the cries of his shipmates, who jibed him that he should allow but a stripling to maltreat him thus, he exerted all his strength to beat me down. But my cimitar played ever and anon about him merrily, first taking him at this side, then the other, then pricking him in front and then—ah, then there came treachery, as I might have expected—in sooth, did expect, and was in a measure prepared for.

As he was beating wildly about me with his cutlass, striving to cut me about the head, and I was warding the blows looking for a chance to sever his arm, I felt more than heard stealthy footsteps behind me, and knew what was in store for me unless I acted quickly. I knew my des-

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perate circumstance—that was in my favor, as it gave me a forlorn hope. I warded his last downward blow with the hilt of my cimitar, and then, completing the curve of the upward stroke by describing a circle, I brought the blade's keen edge across his wrist.

Waiting not to see what had been accomplished, but knowing it nevertheless, I spun around upon my heel and met a burly pirate full in the throat with the sword's edge. He had his left hand extended to grasp me by the back of the neck, and in his right a needle-pointed poniard. Of a truth, it would have gone hard with me had he accomplished his fell design. But he never knew that he did or did not, I trow, for he fell to the deck with a groan and lay there, the while his life-blood flowing forth.

For all this may God forgive me. But—as I hope for salvation—this act was not of my own seeking. My life was given me of God. Was it not my duty to defend it? Not that I would be

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the judge as between the worth of my life and that of the man whom I brought low; but such as my life was, and is, I still hold it as my duty to defend it. At all events, I had taken into my own hands—rather, into my hands it had been thrust, without my seeking—that which it hath been forbidden man to do. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord!”

I do not say but that this saying haunteth me now.

But, look at me after I had vanquished both my opponents: him who had insulted my mother, and him who had sought to slay me stealthily. I was told afterward that I gazed about me fiercely, yet as if stupefied, and still held my cimitar as if to meet any other who might assail me. But none other came. Prone upon the deck lay the twain; the one apparently beyond all recall, the other clasping with his left hand the dissevered wrist of his right, and groaning mightily.

Hitherto I had said no word, and when reason

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seemed to return to me I was also silent. But I shuddered when the circle of men about me opened their mouths and gave forth great shouts, as if of acclaim to a victor. And not alone were these shouts from some of our own men, but all the pirates seemed to join in them as well. Then, of a truth, was I confused yet more than before, and wondered.

The first face that appeared plainly to me out of the mist was that of the pirate leader, Mansvelt. He came forward then, and, bowing low to me, said, with affected humbleness: "If the vainquer pleaseth, I will now reclaim my cimitar. Faith! it hath never before received such brave usage; and I, Mansvelt, who have worn it many years, say so!"

I yielded him his blade, almost without wit of what I did, for I was still in maze. But I had still that instinctive sense of what was due the one who took the cimitar from me—be he pirate or be he gentleman—to take it by the blade and hand him the hilt. And the first words I spake

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were to ask his pardon if I had misused it, pleading my emergency as the sole excuse; also begging him to let me wipe the blood away ere he took it from me.

“Nay, nay,” he said. “Wipe it not away. Give me the blade as it is. These were two good men of mine whom thou hast placed out of fight; but thou didst it bravely, and it shall not be held against thee.”

There was some muttering at this, especially from the group that had gathered about the fallen ones; but, again, there was a shout of approval from the majority of those on board, both of the “Nancy’s” crew and the invaders.

“Yes, hear me, all,” Mansvelt went on, having noted what was said. “This lad is not to be baited for this. He is now one of us. I hold him of our crew; and if any one trouble him henceforth he shall not alone answer to him—and he seems able to care for himself—but to me! Hear ye, all! Now, tumble down below and seek out the treasure. Sooth, we have wasted

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more than time enough this morning. Below, all!"

It must be said that a cold turn seized me when I heard the pirate say I was henceforth to be one of his crew, and made as if to protest. But, most strange it is to say so, I felt not for him the aversion that had at first possessed me. I saw—as well as I could see then, in my dazed condition—that he was, above all else, and if nothing else, eminently fair. For he might easily have caused me to be slain for this misadventure, laying it to rashness or to a spirit of bravado. But, instead, he had generously granted me full absolution, and not only this, but had seemed to take joy in what I had done. Whatever there may have been in me that gave me courage I recognized in him another with a kindred quality, and I felt ashamed, then, of having by my manner cast contempt upon him by refusing his hand when offered me in seeming friendship.

I looked into his eyes, and he met my gaze

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squarely and frankly. The same impulse must have moved us both, for the next moment he held out his hand, which I grasped, as it had been the hand of a friend. And indeed, though I may be scoffed for saying it, so it seemed to me then; nor was my native perception far wrong—then.

“Here, lad,” he said, extending the other hand in which was the portrait, that one of his men had brought him; “here is thy picture. May I ask who is the fair lady?”

“My mother, captain. And I thank thee for returning me the treasure.”

“Thy mother, lad? Ah, let me look at it, prithee. Truly a sweet face, a beauteous face. Thou wert right to fight for her, and couldst not have done less. It touched thy heart to see her misused. I understand. I, too, once had a loving mother. But now—alas!”

CHAPTER IV

IN PIRATES' PARADISE

NOW, was this not a strange situation : to be hand in glove with one, and that one a pirate, whom I had not known four and twenty hours? He was a foreigner, too, and one of whom many sad stories had been told for many years as to his fiendishness. But what of that? He had signally displayed high qualities in his latest dealings with me, and in my soul I recognized these things.

I would have given much to be as sure of my uncle's faith as I was of Mansvelt's. This was another thing strange : that I shrank from my uncle with aversion, as holding him responsible for what had occurred. I could not, it seems, stand off from him, as I could from the pirate

leader, and view him with a due perspective. He was my mother's brother, and I had reason to expect far more of him than of a stranger, but had received far less. Yea, he was my own dear mother's brother. That should have caused my heart to cleave to him; should it not? But though I felt that yearning toward him that our relationship would naturally cause, yet I the more loathed him for his apparent perfidy.

Apparent, say I, for his course was later made more clear to me, as will appear further on. He had made, they told me, as though he would have thrown himself between me and the sailor when I seemed in dire peril, but I had not noticed him, and thought he had stood aloof throughout it all. However, in my ignorance, I turned my back upon him when he would have embraced me, after I had fraternized with Mansvelt, and he, biting his lip and gnawing his beard, retreated.

"Captain Brabazon," said the pirate chieftain, "henceforth consider this vessel under the

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commands of this young man who has shown himself worthy of being one of us. For the sake of prudence, the treasure I have found I will take aboard my ship, but I will leave you your men, and you shall follow after us to my rendezvous."

I thought I detected a gleam of satisfaction, even triumph, in my uncle's eyes, but it was only momentary. He received his orders calmly, assured Mansvelt that he would obey instructions, and then asked if he was to command, or his nephew, meaning me.

Mansvelt chuckled and smiled maliciously, while his mustachios curled like a cat's, as he replied: "Oh, as to that, suit yourselves. But see to it that you follow close after me, and deviate not even a point from the course hence to Tortuga, off the north coast of Haiti. That is the rendezvous, as you may not have known."

"No, Captain Mansvelt, I knew it not, but I know the lay of the island, and can shape a course thither easily." And again there ap-

peared that gleam of triumph, or of some secret satisfaction he fain would have concealed.

As I later learned, it was this information that he most of all desired, and I heard him mutter to himself, after the pirates were all clear of our vessel: "Od zounds, but this alone is worth the fifty thousand pounds though the risk is great!"

The wretches clattered over the side and pulled for their frigate, which by now was close enough—too close, in fact. Several of the common sailors shook their fists at me furtively, and drew their hands significantly across their throats, when Mansvelt's back was turned.

That did not concern me, however, for, if the master was my friend, who then was I to fear? This I casually thought, in my ignorance of what those fierce men were capable of, and not knowing the comradeship that existed between all classes amongst those Brethren of the Sea. I was yet to eat the humble pie and rue the day that I had lopped off the hand of one of them! But

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of all this anon. Under my uncle's direction the vessel wore about and thrust her nose in the frigate's wake, and, under easy sail, we all that day kept on, until the fair isle of Saint Kitts was left far astern, and finally faded out of sight.

Long before nightfall the men had washed the blood-stains from the deck and removed all traces of the fight. But they could not wash away all recollections. That morning, at dawn, I was care-free and young; that night, yea, long before, I had aged years, and was a man with memories. As my uncle took not the slightest notice of me, except in mock deference to ask what were my orders—and, of course, I had none—I sat down in a secluded place on the poop and gave myself up to dismal forebodings. Divers of the crew tried, in clumsy manner, to show their appreciation of my doings, and would have made friends with me, but I could have none of them then. I shrank within myself, and all that day and the night succeeding sat alone ruminating upon what had been done to

me. I say what had been done to me, since I could not but feel that the deed was not of my own volition. I had been an instrument of fate, but for what purpose?

When the current of a lad's life is turned by untoward circumstances, so that from an innocent child he becomes, at once and without preparation, a sin-stained man, it is likely that the awfulness of life looms up before him. No real care had I ere this dire happening, no thought of aught but happy future, with my mother as the central figure in my plans; but now all was changed. Alone and dumbly I wrestled with my troubles, and in that awful night there was evolved only the resolve that never could I return to the one who had hitherto been all in all to me. I grew reckless, and henceforth was a changed being. What mattered it, after all, whether I cast my lot with honest men or with divels? All at once the world of happiness had been closed, the door of hope shut in my face.

IN PIRATES' PARADISE

Morning found me still where the night had left me, and only after the sun had risen red from the sea and burned brazen in the sky did I leave my retreat and go below, where, after drinking a gulp of water and laving my face, I cast myself into my bunk and again abandoned myself to my grief. I heard my uncle's footsteps approach, and heard him mutter: "My poor boy! poor boy!" but I turned not toward him, even when his hand was laid upon my burning forehead. Had not all the world turned against me, and had he not played the traitor to me and to my mother?

Well, that day passed, and another, and near the end of the third day I heard shoutings and the roar of waves upon rocks, so knew that we had come near land. I dragged myself upon deck again and saw—as I must confess despite my misery—the fairest sight that e'er my eyes beheld.

We were off a rugged island with cliffs rising high at a little distance, coral reefs whitened

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with the foam of waves anear, and between cliffs and water broad beaches of golden sands, banked by rows of palms. The frigate was threading her way through a narrow channel between the reefs, scarce wide enough for her to make short tacks and come about again, and we were entering the seaward gateway with foam-tipped prongs of coral within stone's throw on either side. We followed the frigate through the sinuous channel for an hour or so, and, after beating back and forth in her wake, finally reached an open pool big enough to float a score of ships. It was entirely land-locked, yet so deep as to be sufficient for the largest craft. This I ought to know, for afterward I saw many such come hither, led by the nose through the devious channel to this harbor of the buccaneers. For such it was, the famed rendezvous of which Mansvelt had spoken, behind the coral reefs that fend the waves from Tortuga's western shore.

The evening breeze was only just sufficient to bring the vessels' heads up to the wind so that

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moorings might be made off shore, and then the anchors were cast over and the cables payed out until their stern-posts almost rested on the sands. A boat soon put off from the frigate, and from her came a hail in Mansvelt's voice: "Aboard the 'Nancy,' ahoy. Captain Gilbert and his men will stay on board their ship to-night, and neither go ashore nor move the vessel at peril of their lives."

"Aye, aye, sir," cried our first mate, seeing that neither my uncle nor myself responded, but stood glowering by.

"See to it, then," came back in ominous tones. "Stay where you are!"

The sun had sunk by this time, and swift darkness fell upon the isle, enshrouding all. Then out from beneath the rows of palms above the beach gleamed many fires, reminding me of what once I had read in one of my father's books anent the voyages of the great Christopher Columbus, to wit: that one time approaching the southern coast of Cuba which island lay

not so far distant from us then—he had been surprised by the twinkling of innumerable lights, and forthwith named the place where they appeared the Port of Hundred Fires.

Noises indescribable also filled the air: the mingled oaths and laughter of coarse men, once and again the wail of infants, shrill cries of women, and the barking of dogs. All the human beings ashore seemed to be provided with rude huts made of grass and palm leaves, beneath which were swung coarse hammocks, such as the Indian salvages of these parts were wont to use from most early times—as narrated by the Spanish voyagers and in the adventures of Raleigh, Drake and Hawkins. We could see the burly figures of the men lolling in the hammocks, and being waited upon by women, as well as by Indian slaves. All sprang up, however, as Mansvelt's boat touched the sands, and gathered about him with loud cries of welcome. It seemed, in truth, as if every man vied with every other to produce the most vociferous wel-

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come; but it was plain to be noted that there was no heart in their cries, only hollow sound, like the echoes that reverberated from the cliffs above. Some made as if they would fain have taken their leader upon their shoulders and have borne him to his hut; but he waved them aside impatiently, and sent two or three of the most froward sprawling on the sands.

He was a rough master, in sooth, this Mansvelt, and perhaps he needs have been so, with such crews of cutthroats to deal with as he was leader of. After he had entered his hut, which was the largest of the group on the beach beneath the palms, there was comparative silence for the space of an hour or so, then the noise began again, sounding at first like the gatherings of a storm: first low mutterings in the distance, then increasing to a roar, like the howling of winds through the tree-tops. It seemed that another party of pirates from the other side of the island had gotten wind of Mansvelt's arrival and hastened over to do him honor. There were

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some hundred or so of the wildest-appearing and most fantastic objects that I ever saw. In the moonlight at first, and then in the firelight, they seemed more like to demons than men. They capered about the beach, first circling around the fires that had been made for preparing the evening meals at or near every hut, and then marching in single file past the leader's house, from within which came out sounds of revelry. Finally it appeared as though neither party, the small and select one feasting inside with Mansvelt, nor the larger one outside gathered to welcome him, could endure the strained situation longer, and of a sudden the door burst open, and the leader himself stood in the doorway blackly outlined against the light from torches within.

There were yet more vociferous shouts at his appearance, and accompanied by the firing of fusees and arquebuses ; then his right hand shot out in a commanding gesture, and silence swift ensued. I could not hear what he said, but at

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once he ceased speaking, the pandemonium broke loose again, and all made great haste to gather at a certain point, about a gunshot from where our vessel was at anchor. Then I saw, rolling from out a yawning cavern in the cliff behind the hut, a huge puncheon, the appearance of which all the fiends greeted with loud yells of joy. It contained, in fact, the fiery rum of the Indies, which the Spaniards call "aguardiente," or burning water. And in very truth it be well named, for it is not only ardent in itself, but the cause of hell fire entering into those who partake thereof.

The puncheon was rolled out beneath a huge palm tree, where it was ended up and the upper head knocked in. Meanwhile the pirates had provided themselves with coco shells and calabashes, dippers and cups—any sort of vessel soever with the which they might dip out the fiery liquid, and lost no time in their attack upon the common enemy. They fought and cursed around the puncheon, as if their very lives

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depended upon getting their fill of its hellish contents, and as if no time was to be lost in making themselves drunk withal, the which they proceeded to do without delay.

Alas and alack, that man, made in the image of the Creator, should so defile himself! It was not long before nearly all were reeling about under the influence of the accursed liquor or sunken in a drunken stupor. Well had it been if all had been stupefied by the fumes of the aguardiente—well for us aboard the “Nancy,” I mean—for there were some who became enraged who sought our destruction.

CHAPTER V

HOW WE BEHEADED THE HYDRA

WELL had it been for some of those maniacal men if they had but let the fiery water alone, for when the fumes had mounted to their heads the rashest of them conceived a plan to destroy all that were on board our vessel. I need not say that we had been attracted by the noises and the bedevilments ashore, for nothing else could we do but gather at the rail and watch the goings on in silence and amaze. It did not occur to us, however, that there might be a termination to the revel immediately disastrous to ourselves until I noted some of the pirates gathering in a group apart from the main body, who were mostly lying

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on the sands. These were, to be sure, unsteady on their legs ; but the more unsteady they became the more they seemed possessed by fierce desire to carry out the promptings of their evil minds.

It did not astound me at all to see among them my friend of the duel fight, nor to see him point at our vessel now and again most menacingly ; nor yet again that he soon formed a nucleus for a body of men that all at once started on a run for the shore. They tumbled into a long boat that was drawn up on the sands, and while some pushed it off afloat others took their places at the oars. They were not so drunk that they had not precautioned to take with them their cutlasses and some few their arquebuses. Indeed, they never even slept without these arms either strapped about them or within reach ; and it were perhaps superfluous to say that they were armed to the teeth. A few strokes of the oars brought their boat alongside, when it became evident what was their intention

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—namely, to carry the vessel by boarding and perhaps murder us all in cold blood.

But, methinks, we should have well deserved our fate had we been idle all this time and allowed them to take us unawares. As soon as the groups had begun to collect my uncle said to me in a low tone: "Son Humphrey, there is mischief brewing; go thou to the mate and tell him to call all hands on deck—if they are not already up—and arm them, every man and boy."

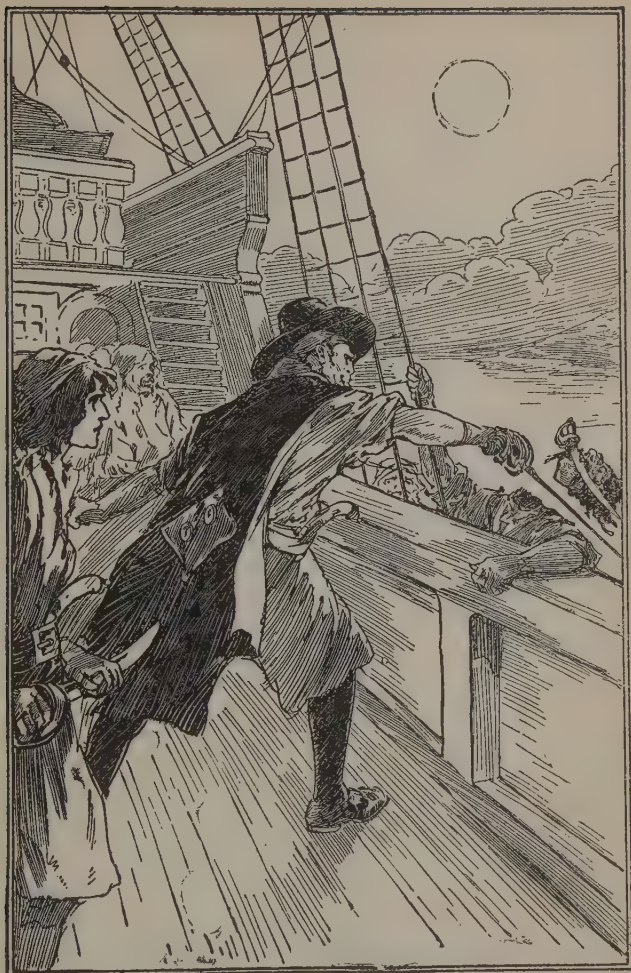
This was the first direct speech he had had with me since our estrangement; but a common danger caused us to come together, at least temporarily, and there was no difference of opinion now. By the time the pirates had brought their boat under the "Nancy's" quarter every one of our crew was crouched behind the bulwarks, each with an arm of some sort in his grasp, and each resolved to sell his life, if need be, dearly.

Whatever may be said of our foes, it cannot be told that they were in any sort cowards,

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though, in sooth, some of them may have had what our sailors satirically called "Dutch courage" from imbibing of the ardent water. They hesitated not in climbing up the side of the vessel, each man with a cutlass between his teeth and a pistol in his belt. Their base intention was evident enough, but my uncle would not take any mean advantage, nevertheless, and as the head of the first man appeared above the rail he hailed and demanded the meaning of this visit.

The pirate spluttered something between a curse and a threat—his speech greatly distorted on account of the blade between his lips—and my uncle then hailed again, this time with temper, saying that the first man that came over the rail would be killed instanter. So there was no mistake as to his meaning then, and, if the object of the pirates was misinterpreted, they had opportunity for retreat. It cannot be said of us that we took any mean advantage of the foe, but, when it became only too evident what the real in-



For Prey and Spoils.—2.

"MY UNCLE LOPPED OFF THE HEAD OF THE PIRATE."

See p. 75.

HOW WE BEHEADED THE HYDRA

tention was, we no longer hesitated in our attack.

With one mighty sweep my uncle lopped off the head of the pirate who first appeared in sight, and it fell into the water, with his cutlass still clenched in his teeth: a most grewsome sight, that distorted countenance with the blade across it as it was lapped by the waves ere it disappeared beneath them! So fierce was this man's nature, so determined, that his clenched hands held to the ropes he had grasped for a full minute, I should think, before the headless trunk to which they were attached finally plunged after the gory, ghastly head.

I was gazing straight into his face ere it all happened, and was for a moment transfixed with horror to the spot on which I stood. But for a moment only, for the time had come for action. Despite this rude rebuff, the man's companions came swarming over the rail—how I know not, but they came, one after the other—until some half

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score of them had dropped to the decks and were fighting back to back.

I had no stomach for the battle at first ; nor, indeed, ever had I desire to fight with any one ; but here was I forced again, despite my inclination, to defend my life in dire extremity. There was no time for thought, however ; action was the cry. My companions were already at it, hammer and tongs, as the saying is, and if we would win we should be obliged to fight to the utmost. So at it I went, firing my pistol at the foremost man that came at me, and then throwing the weapon—there being no time to reload—into the face of the next one. Shifting, then, my cutlass from left hand to right, I sprang into the thick of it—to my shame, perhaps, be it said, with increasing joy—and laid about me on all sides without discrimination.

There was no individual foe to fight, only one great hydra-headed monster to cut and whack at, which seemed then the chief end of my being. I remember that, in the midst of it all,

HOW WE BEHEADED THE HYDRA

I recalled the fabled Hydra of Greek history, and imagined myself another Hercules. Such vagaries do possess one when he is in straits, even showing that the mind and body are two independent things, quite apart and dual in their nature.

Do not imagine that I would arrogate to myself all the glories of this fight, because I was but one unit in a dozen, each one doing as much as I, perhaps more than I was doing. But I am sure each man and boy of our crew felt the same: that his existence was at stake, and though a short time before life did not seem worth a purchase, still it should be sold most dearly.

Short-sighted human beings that we were. Granted we won a victory, what then? Still were we captives of pirates, even if we slew all then opposed to us. It were of a verity, a labor of Hercules with his hundred-headed monster. But we were not then speculating as to our future: the living present was straight in front of us.

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We fought, then, as fiends, though I later may have indulged in speculation as a philosopher. I was callous to what hurt I caused the monsters, and the more the blood flowed the more exasperated I became, whether it were blood of friend or foe. A spasm of horror convulsed me as a burly pirate cut down our cook's assistant, a mere boy, with blue eyes and flaxen hair, a frail form, but with a spirit big enough to fill the frame of man. In an instant I pictured his mother's grief when she should know—if ever—what had befallen her darling; his sister's despair, his father's impotent rage; for he was a not distant neighbor of my family at home, and, like myself, had come on this voyage as for a pleasure trip.

One vast, complex emotion swept through me, and I dashed myself against the man who had done the deed as if he, and he only, were in front of me. Here, at last, was the monster, and I hacked at him with cutlass until he, too, seemed to realize that there was no other foe than the

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stripling in front of him. He withdrew his blade, all reeking with the blood of that fair boy, and turned upon me with a howl like that of a wolf. I laughed at him as he made for me, so crazed was I with the exultation born of combat. I no longer had a life to lose—only a cause to defend. By some chance I secured a position astride the body of the boy, as he lay there motionless upon the bloody deck, and the resolve that possessed me was that not all the world of furies should move me from that spot.

Well, why tell of what happened after that? Does not the fact that I am alive to write of the adventure prove that I survived? The others? Ah, well, the half of us were slain; and nearly all, including my uncle, were most sorely wounded. It was miraculous, perhaps, that I, almost alone, escaped without a cut; but so it was.

Did I slay the man who cut down the boy? It must have been, but I have no recollection of it. I remember his onslaught, that he bore

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heavily upon me, breathing his fetid breath in my face, and that I thrust him back, hacking at him with utmost loathing. And after he had fallen—for he soon had plunged heavily forward amongst the heap of slain—I found myself still standing over the body of the boy. Well it was for me that the fight that moment ceased, for as I stooped to raise the poor fellow from the deck I presented a most fair mark for a foe. But, though I realized it not, the horrid din still ringing in my ears—the shouts, oaths, clash and swish of cutlasses, and the crash of pistol-shots—the combat had really ceased.

We had won, that was apparent, if one had life left to observe, for a few of us were still standing, while of the foe not one was on his legs. Whether we had killed all, or some made their escape, I did not ask, nor did I care, for I was absorbed in the youth I had rescued. I raised him from the deck and bore him gently to a coil of rope near the rail, where he could half recline and the better discharge the blood that welled

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up through his mouth. For he was living—to my joy I noted that—though weak and unconscious from the loss of blood.

Then was I overcome with anguish at sight of this fair lad sore smitten there. For the first time my tears began to fall. Think me not craven or faint-hearted; but, indeed, the strain of the fight had told on me. Perhaps it was not cowardly to weep, after all, for my tears were forced by the sight of another's sufferings. At all events, I wept, and, while still blinded by my tears, stumbled upon a recumbent figure, as I rose to go for water with which to bathe the lad's face.

It was my uncle, prostrate, his face all bloody, his right hand pressed against his breast. Then my heart gave a great leap, and I was smitten with a pang more acute than I had ever felt. Remorse, as well as anguish, seized upon me then, for in a moment I realized how resentful I had felt toward him, and now it might be too late to crave his pardon! I knelt and

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placed my ear to his heart. It still beat, and he was still alive, thank God!

I ran to the water cask, filled the nearest vessel and hastened back to my patients twain. I washed the blood from their faces, forced a little water between the lips of each, and had the happiness to see them open their eyes. The boy recovered first to that extent, then my uncle; but neither spake for a while, for the blood that filled their throats.

As I was kneeling between them, striving to stanch the flow of blood from their wounds, first working upon one and then upon the other, I noted finally a look of strained intensity in my uncle's eyes, and glancing upward saw the figure of a buccaneer standing over me. He was evidently a new arrival, at all events some one who had not taken part in the fight.

The moon was at the full, and everything was clearly visible. Rising to an erect posture, I turned an enquiring gaze upon the intruder, then resumed the work which he had interrupted,

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as he said nothing, and my labor was important.

The man was tall and broad-shouldered, his form being burly rather than athletic or well knit; his face was dark and strong, with black and piercing eyes, a hooked nose, and small mustachios adorning his upper lip. His hair was black and abundant, flowing over the collar of his doublet. His dress was richer than that of the average buccaneer, denoting somewhat of authority, which indeed his manner confirmed. That he was 'somebody high in command I did not doubt; neither did I care. For the die had been cast, the fight fought out, and if we were still in the pirates' hands—as undoubtedly we were—what use to borrow trouble?

"Well, my lad," spake the buccaneer, at last, "you seem to have had a busy time. What has happened?"

"Happened?" I repeated, vexed beyond measure at this foolish question. "Oh, nothing, of course. Go ask those dead men on the deck."

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“Hoity, toity, but you are a cool one. Know you not who I am?”

“No, nor care. But get hence; these friends need my attentions.”

“Zounds! I’ve a mind to run you through. Know, then, I am Morgan!”

“And what then?” I answered, impatiently. “I am Gilbert, an Englishman and an honest one; which I trow is more than you can say.”

The buccaneer frowned darkly, as I could see, for I was again erect and the moon shone full upon his face. He rattled his sword in its scabbard, as though he would draw it on me, but thought better of it, and turned away, gnawing at his mustachios savagely.

CHAPTER VI

FEEDING THE SHARKS AT TORTUGA

IT may not be out of place to state that I hated this man, Morgan, from the first moment I saw, or rather felt, him standing over me in the moonlight, that night of unhappy memories. And it may be well, moreover, to further state that there was ever enmity between us, an inborn antagonism, that raged until it broke out into a bitter feud. I am anticipating events by several years; for this story of mine takes the better portion of my life; but no matter. That I live to narrate it is proof positive that I survived, as I have said already; but there were times, yea, oft and again, that I wished I were dead, all on account of this man.

How he came upon us so quietly I know not,

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except that the noise of strife on our vessel was so great that his ship crept in through the channel unawares and ran alongside. But there he was, a living, terrible presence, an apparition of evil, far more reckless and cruel than even Mansvelt—and that is saying much.

It may seem strange, perhaps, that Mansvelt had not made his appearance when the fight was raging; but it would not seem so to one who knew his reckless character. He always held that men's lives were cheap, saying boldly in our presence that it were far better to enlist new crews than to strive to save the old ones. So when his men engaged in fights amongst themselves, as they did full oft, he laid himself low and took no part therein.

That he had professed a certain liking, even admiration, for me did not argue that he loved me enow to risk his precious life in my defence, and so when he knew his men were setting out to kill us all on board the "Nancy" he preferred to stay in his hut rather than to see that

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I was safe from harm. Young as I was then, I knew I had nothing to expect from Mansvelt, despite his protestations. He might praise and fondle me, perchance, and doubtless would commend me for resisting his own men and taking part in the killing of them. Such was his savage, inexplicable nature, more like that of a wolf than of a human being. But still, in my heart I felt more trust in him than Morgan; and wisely, as the sequel showed to me.

But do not believe that I reasoned all this out that night, with all my troubles thick upon me; my uncle sore wounded, perhaps unto death, and the lad my messmate also. After I had cared for them to the extent of my ability, and had finally stanchèd the flow of blood and received token of their relief from their easier breathing, I left them for a bit and looked about to make an estimate of the losses we had met with. To be brief—for though the other lives were as precious, doubtless, as our own, yet they are not of moment to this narrative—I found that nearly

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half our men had fallen in the fight. The mate was dead, so was the boatswain, and three others had also fallen in their tracks. My heart was like lead and seemed a bullet in my breast; but I was pervaded by a sullen indifference to what might befall, begotten of what had befallen already. And the few survivors were as regardless of what fate had in store for us as I was myself. They obeyed my orders mechanically, as it were, like men of wood pulled by a string; but still they obeyed, and ere morning dawned we had the decks cleared after a fashion, the dead laid out in rows under the rails and the wounded attended to. There was no surgeon there, so it was no surprise that full half the wounded died before the week was out, what with the heat of day, the tropical insects that festered in their wounds, and lack of skillful care. Nurse them we did, to the extent that most of us dropped down from fatigue, ever and anon. And then the dead! Ere the first day succeeding that dread night was over it became

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evident to us survivors that we could not leave them on the vessel. So I sent word to Mansvelt that nineteen corpses lay on our decks awaiting burial, hoping he would see to it that they received interment ashore; for of a surety I could not bury them there without his permission.

But he replied that, as we had killed them, so we must bury them, and that in his opinion the best we could do was to throw them to the sharks, of which the harbor was full, ravenous and bloodthirsty. It grieves me to write this; but even so we were compelled to do, to toss the corpses overboard, when the tide was on the ebb, which was near evening of the day following that night of horror. Ah, it was cruel and pitiful to do this, and all in sight of our wounded, who lay now on mattresses stretched upon the deck, the air below being too close and stifling for them to stay there.

I had my mother's book of prayer with me, one of her precious gifts, and perforce I was the chaplain, even as I was also sexton and helped

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launch the dead into the deep. We bared our heads, and at the foot of each stark body, whether of a fallen mate or foe, I read the prayer for the dead, not omitting to ask God to forgive us all, living as well as dead, for the sins we had committed.

Then, having done this, we returned to the first one of the line, lifted him to the rail and dropped him overboard. We peered after that first man, loth to let him go, alone and unattended, on his last journey ; but we looked not again after there came a great inrush of the ravenous horde of sharks, gathered as if awaiting what they knew was coming.

“Oh, God !” I cried. “Was it for this thou hast made us? Father in Heaven, is there no escape, either for the dead or the living?” I looked around into the faces of my men, but they regarded me stonily. Only the moans of the wounded broke the silence—only the moans of the wounded—and the horrid sounds from the sea, where the sharks were fighting and

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lashing the water to foam. Wearily and heavily we took up the task again, and at last all was finished. We had done our duty by the dead so far as in us lay to do it; there now remained the living, wounded ones.

Better had it been, I have often thought, if my uncle had died ere he had witnessed that terrible spectacle; for he had seen it all, perforce, lying there under the rail, with wide staring eyes and parted lips. After it was over he beckoned to me, and I went and sat beside him, taking his hands in mine and trying to soothe him with loving words. My cup of sorrow was full, I had thought; but now it was to run over.

"Humphrey, my son," he whispered, "I cannot stay with thee much longer. Ere I go, however, I must tell thee a secret; then—then perhaps thou wilt think better of thy uncle." His breath came hard, and with effort only he spake; so I tried to soothe and check him, saying he must keep what he had to say till later. There was no secret he could tell me that would change

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my regard for him, for now I knew I loved him, and was sorry and ashamed that I had entertained any doubt at all. But he would go on, saying that his time was short, and he must speak.

And this is what he said, struggling mightily with his words, for the hand of death was then upon him : “ Humphrey, dear, my only sister’s son, thou hast had occasion to doubt my honor, for I have tried thee sore. Know, then, dear boy, that I gave our ship into the hands of the pirate for a reason. It was this : The lords of the British admiralty commissioned me to find where he had his rendezvous ; and I could think of no other way than to let him capture our vessel and take us thither, then escape, if so be I might, and after reaching dear old England guide hither ships of war to take this stronghold and capture the pirates.

“But I did not realize the full measure of the peril I had brought upon thee and our mates, until—until it was too late—too late ! I felt

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it first when thou wert in the encounter with that man who insulted thy mother, my sister, yet could not declare myself, since that would have been to divulge my plan. Thou knowest the rest, dear—how the scheme hath miscarried woefully. I know now that it is wrong to do evil that, perchance, good may come. I am properly punished for my fault. But thou, oh, Humphrey, my boy, what will become of thee?”

Of a truth, I was racked with remorse when I heard this confession, and knew then how I had misjudged my uncle. I should have known that no one of my mother's blood could do aught that was low or mean. And I misjudged him so! God pity me! forgive me! I cried out aloud in my anguish.

“Hush, my boy,” whispered my uncle, softly. “Thou art forgiven. Young, impetuous, honest, what else couldst thou do but resent what thou thoughtst was wrong? I was the one in the wrong. I should have taken thee into my con-

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fidence. In that failure to do so my error lay."

He was silent for a short space, and then said, brokenly: "Darling boy, thou art as a son to me. Oh, if I could but live to fill thy dead father's place in thy affections! But, dear, I am going now. My sight fails me. I cannot see thee, Humphrey. Place thy arm around me and kiss me, dear, for thy mother's sake. God grant thou mayest see her again! And tell her not to think harshly of me for what I have done. I thought it was for the best.

"I go now to join my brave admiral, under whom I fought at Teneriffe. Would that I could be buried near the Dart, Humphrey. But, oh, do not—do not throw me overboard to the—no, thou wilt not; but bury me ashore, beneath the palms. It is meet that I should be buried here. This is the stronghold I sought. I found it, only to be buried in it. Now, God receive my spirit! Dear Lord, bless thou this boy, and lead him hence from this den of demons into the

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haven where She liveth whose love we treasure.
Be a lamp unto—his—feet ; guide thou—guide
thou—him. Forgive—forgive—me—”

The voice died away and all was still. I knew then that I was doubly orphaned, that the form in my arms was only lifeless clay ; but I pressed the dear face to mine and called upon the dead to speak to me again. Vainly, vainly. The stout heart was stilled. I was alone !

What are these my sorrows to others that I should so dwell upon them now ? They are naught, except as showing what hath happened to a human being, and what may happen to another. It is in the sympathy of sorrow, as well as of love, that the heart finds its fellow, and says not the good Book : “ Better the house of mourning than of feasting ? ” But it is not of my desire that I conduct my reader thither—perchance there be one who shall find and peruse what I have written.

Bear with me yet awhile, and I shall show how—incredible as it may seem, as indeed it once

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seemed to me—I grew to find a joy in living and even (what is better) made others feel also that joy. In those dread days when we first found the pirates' isle I descended to almost fathomless deeps of sorrow; yet I rose again, slowly rose, until, as I have said, there came to me a veritable joy in merely living.

Didst ever think how surpassing good it is to be alive? And yet, at the time my uncle passed away (as narrated), I had rather have died than harbored such a thought. This shows what there is of endurance in man: that when it may seem sorrow or disaster of other sort hath crushed him down, the saving virtue of hope, love for another—as in my case for my mother—beareth him up and guideth him to some haven of rest. But think not that I obtained surcease of sorrow within brief space, for the hand of fate was heavy upon me for years. And bear in mind that this narrative is written in after life, even though it pertain exclusively to the doings of my youth.

Now let me revert to my special charges: my

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dear uncle, whose limbs had stiffened in death beneath my eyes, and the lad who still lived, and in his conscious intervals had been a witness to those dire happenings. Well it was that the lad had a hold on me, else I should not have survived the demise of my dear relative. I say it were well—and yet, upon reflection, of what I later passed through, the sins I was forced to connive at, the criminals I was compelled to consort with, and the terrible scenes to witness—who knows?

But, yes, God knows. He it was gave me life—bestowed upon the clay known to man as Humphrey Gilbert the animating spirit that permeated my being, that made me different from the beast of the field. It behooved me, then, to keep this spirit pure, unsullied, no matter what the body in which it was incarnate might be called on to endure, inasmuch that at last it should be rendered back to God untainted.

And did I this? Dear God, Father Almighty, thou knowest! How the spirit and the

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flesh have striven in me, how I have been cast down, dumb and despairing, carnally o'erweighted, and again have striven upward until I almost gazed within thy pearly gates, Thou knowest!

Into the boiling caldron of sin I was plunged, and seethed therein until the flesh near parted from my bones; yet was not quite the spirit quenched. Seared was my conscience, mayhap; but a spark remained which I trust shall make for life eternal.

CHAPTER VII

BUCCANEERS MANSVELT AND MORGAN

NOW remained the performance of my duty to my uncle. I had promised him that he should not be tossed to the sharks, and should be buried 'neath one of the swaying palms on shore, provided I could accomplish it. To do so I must seek Mansvelt in his lair and beg the favor of him, or of whomsoever made pretense of being the lord of the isle. Doubtless it was Mansvelt, but I misdoubted if the pirate Morgan would not have a word to say. And it was even so, for when I went ashore to proffer the request I found the twain holding high revel in the leader's hut. They had little mind to listen to me, in sooth; but my mission

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was urgent, my heart was callous with much suffering, and I cared nothing for their whims.

“How is this?” demanded Mansvelt, after I had gained entrance to the room where he was reclining in a hammock surrounded by his boon companions. “How is this? Is it not enough that ye all should murder some dozen or more of my honest knaves who had gone aboard your craft on pleasure bent, but that ye also should desire me to bury them? Who is this man you would thrust upon my island now? Ods blood, but there are bones enough buried here now, without adding to the number. Over on the leeward side is a veritable golgotha.

“Well, yes, bring him ashore, for one more or less will not matter. But who is he that of all the number slain should be so highly honored? No sailor, I ’ll trow, who prefers a dry grave ashore to the salt sea.”

“It is my uncle, sir,” I managed to stammer, yet looking him full in the eye. “You knew him

when alive, yet he would not wish me to beg a favor of you, that I am sure."

"What, Brabazon? He killed? Well, I'm sorry. He was the most skillful navigator ever sailed these seas, and I had hoped yet to have him one of us. He would have made a fine chief mate, in sooth. He was a brave man, too. I feel moved to go with you and see him laid at rest. What sayest thou, Morgan, shall we go and do the honors?"

"Go an't pleaseth thee," snarled the one addressed, who was lolling near in another hammock; "but as for me, this wine is to my taste. I'll not leave it for any dog's funeral, let alone Brabazon. I have it from my spies that he came here of a purpose: namely, to gather information of the rendezvous and then haste home to England, eke to return with the king's ships and hang the whole of us!"

"Not so," returned Mansvelt. "When I took him he was bound for the Barbadoes, whither he was going for a cargo."

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"When you took him! Ah, ha, that is rich enough. Why, man, he allowed himself to be taken, that he might be brought here and gain the evidence that would swing us all from the yard's arm."

"Thou liest, Morgan, I took him in a fair fight."

"Fight? Call you that a fight when no blood was shed save by that youngster yonder, and that, too, of your own men in the quarrel that he picked with them? Better make it a double funeral and bury them both in the same grave—Brabazon and his nephew—else the pup may carry out the old dog's scheme and cause us trouble later."

Morgan had said all this without even rising from his reclining position in the hammock, and without raising his voice, as if it were a matter of indifference to him, yet the words stung the more, both Mansvelt and myself. I felt the blood boil within my veins and that creeping at the roots of my hair which boded ire. It was



For Prey and Spoils.—3.

"MORGAN SAID ALL THIS WITHOUT RISING FROM THE
HAMMOCK."

See p. 102.

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only by the mightiest effort that I controlled myself. I did not wish to engage in unseemly strife at that time when on such an errand, and I tried to still the beating of my heart and the bounding of my pulse, resolving to swallow the insult rather than allow myself to be drawn into a quarrel.

But Mansvelt had no such scruples as mine to restrain him, and he leaped to his feet soon as the words were said that impugned his honor and veracity. His cimitar he jerked from its scabbard and flourished aloft, at the same time exclaiming that he would make Morgan eat those words: that he must fight unless he retracted what he had said. As for the latter, he seemed in no whit moved by the actions of the Frenchman, although in the circles described by Mansvelt's cimitar in the air it came very near to his head. He continued puffing tobacco, blowing rings of smoke into the air, and now and then reaching for a cup of wine, held by an Indian slave who stood trembling by. He seemed

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to enjoy the confusion he had created, and his huge shoulders quaked with inward merriment. One would have thought, seeing him thus, that he had cracked the greatest joke in the world.

But the confusion was not all of either his or Mansvelt's creating, for at his suggestion of burying me in the same grave with my uncle there arose a shout of approval from the rest of the company gathered there at the revel, nearly all, as with one voice, yelling out: "Aye, bury them together. One grave for both! One grave for both!" And weapons were unloosed, while, if scowls could have killed a person, I were like to fall dead at once.

I stood my ground, however, neither replying to the wretches nor yielding to the impulse that now and again seized me of taking to my heels and seeking shelter on the ship. It seemed to me, despite the apparent danger I was in, that these fools were merely vamping, and especially Mansvelt, with his sword play at the empty air and his oaths, which he continued to explode

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like Chinese fireworks in a barrel. My opinion of him underwent a change as I saw him thus, and at that particular moment his rival, Morgan, appeared to the better advantage, I ween.

At last the latter thundered forth: "Avast and belay there, fool. Enough of this boy's play. If you misdoubt me ask the lad what his uncle's intentions were. Stand forth, thou British cur," he said, addressing me, "and tell us what thou knowest about the admiralty scheme. Tell Monsieur Mansvelt that I am no liar!"

"That you cannot prove by me," I said, recklessly enough. "Where you got that tale I know not, but from the time our ship left England until the day we arrived at this island I never heard a word of it. But, then, I was not master of the vessel. Belike he would not have confided his plans, if he had any such, to his cabin boy."

"No, belike," sneered Morgan, bringing his evil face close to mine (for he had now left his hammock and was on his feet), "but he might

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have confided them to his sister's son when at the point of death. He might have done this, and this he did, as you cannot deny, and also have bound you by an oath to carry out his scheme. Is that so?"

Like a flash then it came to me how this villain had secured the information: he had been eavesdropping while my dear uncle had falteringly confessed to me his scheme in his last moments. Unutterable loathing of the creature took possession of me then, and I drew away from him as though he were a thing unclean—as, in sooth, he was.

"I will not tell you what my uncle said to me. His last words are sacred. But, be assured, he bound me by no oath." I told him this much and then lapsed into silence, resolved not to speak again.

"Sacred, eh?" the pirate repeated after me with a leer. "Know, fool, that there is nothing sacred in these seas. Not life, nor death, nor religion. For this is the nether world—d' ye

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hear? This is the place where demons dwell. We are all divels here. That ape over there (pointing to Mansvelt) is a French divel; I am a Welsh divel; those asses who brayed so loudly just now are mongrel divels; but all, all are possessed of the evil one!"

"Oh, let the lad alone," now interposed Mansvelt, his fury being now spent and Morgan's ghastly jesting putting him in good humor again. "What matters it whether he knows of his uncle's plan or not, or whether Brabazon had a scheme? Who cares? Brabazon is dead; the boy cannot escape us, and as for the British admiralty, like all things British, it is pig-headed and dense. Were it the French admiralty, now—ah, that would be different."

"Of course," snarled the Briton, "the difference between something and nothing. "No wasp-waisted Frenchman yet could handle a vessel, let alone a navy; which, by the way, your nation never owned."

"Eh, bien," returned the Frenchman, now

thoroughly good-humored. "Have it your own way. But let the lad go bury his uncle. Captain Brabazon was not the man to wait on others in his life; methinks this delay must be vexatious to him." He laughed at his grim joke and his boon companions joined in, so there was peace again in camp.

Such as I have described him was the buccaneer, Henry Morgan, though I have given but a phase or two of his hideous character. It makes me ashamed that one of my countrymen should have sunk so low as he, should have given to the land of his birth such a reputation; but he was born a monster, it would seem. A native of Wales, his father a wealthy farmer, somehow or other Morgan became enamored of the sea, and shipped for the Barbadoes, arrived at which island the master of his vessel sold him into slavery, in a manner, that sort of white slavery being then in vogue; that is, men and boys were lured to the islands under one pretence and another, or else sent there for their offences, and indentured to the

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planters for terms of years. The latter saw to it that their 'prentices did not escape without paying them well for their investments, and many a poor white slave paid his reckoning with his life.

Morgan, however, was of stronger stuff than the common run, and instead of sinking under his misfortunes ran away and escaped them. He made his way either to Saint Kitts or to Jamaica, and there joined the fraternity known as the Brethren of the Sea, or the Buccaneers, becoming shortly one of the best known of those gentry and carrying things before him with a high hand. Having in mind the sufferings he had endured from his own countrymen in particular, he always held a grudge against them, it would seem, being especially cruel to such as fell into his clutches. Many a poor mariner had he made to walk the plank, and many a British ship had he consigned to the flames, after sacking her of all she held worth taking away.

When I first made his acquaintance he was

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not much more than thirty years old, having been born, he always held, in 1637. As I have already described him: he was big and burly, peculiarly phlegmatic when he chose, but as cruel as a tiger or hyena—which latter he seemed more to resemble in his ghoulish delight in p[re]ying away from his victims, whether dead or alive, the last shred of character he was able to deprive them of. Just when he made the acquaintance of my friend Mansvelt I never knew, but they had known each other some time when I first found them. They had already been engaged in several nefarious expeditions, had plundered a city and taken galleons galore. They made a good pair together so long as they could agree, for the Frenchman was crafty and designing, while the Englishman was bold and relentless in pursuit. The one would plan a scheme of plunder, be it the sacking of a city on the Main or the cutting out of a fleet of treasure ships from its convoy, and the other would execute it.

MANSVELT AND MORGAN

This precious pair of rascals would not much longer hold together, as any one the least observant could see with half an eye, for they were now wealthy beyond all calculation from the plunder they had taken, and had little more to gain by working in unison. Each was getting restive under the domineering of the other, and there were not lacking those in Tortuga who predicted that the question of leadership would soon be settled by personal combat. There could be only one leader; but while Mansvelt enjoyed the nominal distinction, Morgan was really the dominant one. He had hitherto kept pretty much at sea, being a pirate that was happy only when sailing under the black flag with the cross-bones on it at the masthead in open sea. But latterly he had shown a preference for Tortuga that was most unusual, sometimes spending weeks ashore, when he should have been off scouring the sea, Mansvelt thought, for their common prey.

I learned later that there was a fair lady in

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the case, whose favors both were striving for, and who dwelt a prisoner in Tortuga under guard of Mansvelt's men. It did not seem possible to me then that any man could care sufficiently for any woman, not his mother or sister, to fight for her withal; but as I grew older I grew wiser, and learned what it was to become interested to that extent. In sooth, no knight-errant of chivalry could have fought more fiercely for his lady love than I myself fought in defence of this same lady's honor later on. I mean she who was the cause of trouble between Morgan and Mansvelt.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAVE IN THE CLIFFS

I RETURNED to the vessel with a heavy, heavy heart, for I had now the saddest of duties to perform—the putting away forever of my only real friend here, my dear uncle. It was assuaging to my grief, in a sense, that I could comply with his last request and place him in a grave ashore, rather than consign him to the deep ; but even so, what can be more terrible than death, in any form ? I know the best of books saith, or intimateth, there is no sting in death, there is no victory in the grave ; but I was not then in a state to consider the solaces therein contained. My bereavement was too recent, and the circumstances attending upon my uncle's death too terrible.

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Welcomed aboard the "Nancy" as one returning from having encountered dire peril—for my friends had seen the gathering groups of muttering and scowling men as I passed, and feared for my safety ashore—it was indeed a relief to be once more among men of my own land and those who had known and respected my uncle. With their assistance I enshrouded the dear form in the ship's flag, placed it in a casket we roughly hewed from plank, and then we bore our erstwhile commander ashore in the long boat. We could not but anticipate trouble, seeing that there were those on shore who were friends of the men we had slain; yet none of us was armed, save with the utensils we carried for digging the grave. They were strange men, those Brethren of the Sea. Although fierce in their nature and savage in onslaught, unrestrained in their passions and moved oft by cruel impulse, they seemed soon to forget their injuries and harbored no thoughts of revenge on those who had opposed them valiantly in

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their defence. So they ventured no opposition to our sad procession, but held aloof; for the which we were very grateful, as may be well believed.

I had selected a spot enclosed by huge rocks, near a projecting point where grew a solitary palm, as the last resting-place of my dear kinsman, and here we dug the grave, near to the murmuring waters of the sea, yet beneath the shadow of the great cliffs. Having placed him therein and recited the prayers for the dead, we left him to his last rest, in this spot so far distant from his kin and the home he loved so well.

But I will dwell no longer upon this grievous situation. Let me now turn to scenes that have in them more the promise of hope. Our little company, now reduced to the forlorn remnant of our crew that survived the pirates' onslaught, took up the burden of daily duties as though life had held out to us the golden promise of release from the slavery into which we were now plunged. A hopeless slavery, it appeared; yet

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in our hearts was ever the hope that something might offer that would give us that release for which we daily prayed.

The buccaneers were not long to leave us in doubt as to their intentions, for that very evening came from Mansvelt to get ashore and occupy some huts which the Indians had been ordered to construct for us above the beach at the base-line of the cliffs. These huts were made of palm leaves, in form dome-shaped and about ten feet in diameter, after the manner in vogue amongst the Carib salvages whom the first Spaniards found in possession of these West Indian isles. Owing to the mild and equable climate, ever soft and genial, save in the months of *ouragans*, when the rains fell in torrents and the winds blew with mighty violence, these huts sufficed us well as dwelling-places. The clean beach sand formed the floors, the bright leaves of the cocoa palms the roofs, and but for our dreadful straits we might have enjoyed their occupancy. One of the huts was assigned as a

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hospital, in which were gathered our sorely wounded ones—all save the youth I have mentioned, who was permitted to be in my sole charge and to share with me the hut first in the line nearest to the cliffs. This lad had recovered swiftly from his cuts and bruises, and it was not many days ere he could walk about a bit, steadied by my arms around him; but ever after he walked but with a limp, from the cruel gash he had received in one of his legs.

As I have said, it was fortunate that I had him dependent upon me for support—well for me that I had some one in my charge more weakly than myself—for in the care I gave him I was somewhat absorbed, and had less time to brood over my own troubles.

The sharing of another's sorrows is, in the wise dispensation of Almighty God, one of the compensations of life. Let me impress this truth upon thee, oh, reader mine, in whatsoever age or clime thou dwellest, for it is a foundation fact of our brief existence. The dear Lord, in

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his superlative wisdom, gave to me this youth to care for, to take in a measure the place of my departed relative and my mother ; and, sooth, it was with a brother's love that I grew to regard him, and he requited all my care with a deep regard. This love for him and by him was the sweetener of my existence, then, and so long as we lived together. And, what is strange, the rough buccaneers respected our devotion to each other, and, besides some sneering allusion to "David and Jonathan" on the part of Morgan and his like, they threw no jibes at us nor sought to separate us while we dwelt on the isle of blood.

In the coolest corner of our hut I swung a hammock, so placed that he could look out upon the sea while lying there, and where, soothed by the murmur of the waves and the rustling of the broad cocoa leaves o'erhead, he full oft lay and dozed in seeming content. His name was John James Blake, and he came of a good family that owned a property contiguous to our

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manor near the Dart. He was two years younger than myself, fair as to complexion, slight as to build, and of a loving, gentle disposition. Making no complaint, but rather enduring all without a murmur, he looked upon me as his saviour, and said many a time and oft that he owed his life to me. Whether this were so or no, it gave to me keen sense of pleasure to think that such might be the case ; yet I always chided him for the remark, reminding him that we were not yet “out of the woods,” and he had better not halloa too soon. At which he would smile faintly, and say that he was sure some good would come of this, since God in his mercy had allowed his life to be spared.

I prepared his meals and mine together, during the day sitting by his side or within call, and at evening time, when the sun drew near to the horizon, I would bring forth my dear mother's Bible and read to him such portions as were most comforting. At such latter times we would seem to be lifted nigh to the very

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heaven of which the precious Book of books reminded us. Yea, even in despite of our surroundings, for we felt ourselves renewed by those eternal truths therein contained, and dwelt for brief space with the verities of God.

Far be it from me to endeavor to preach to thee, reader, or to dogmatize; but be assured that this be true, for it is founded on the everlasting rock of promise: that whosoever layeth hold upon the eternal verities hath naught to fear. This earth and all it containeth shall pass away, but the Word of God remaineth forever. This much only I know: that in our case it was a steadfast anchor to our souls, but for which we should have been swept away to destruction.

It was then that I first appeared to receive the saving glimmer of light from above, coming to me through the Word, and showing me how much there might yet be, even in this world, worth living for and enjoying. While sitting at the hut's entrance, which opened toward the sea and the west, on my knee the sacred Book,

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and with one hand clasped by the lad's hand hanging over the hammock's side, the sinking sun would oft embrace us in his golden beams.

We would then cease from reading and from converse, and watch the red orb sink beneath the waves, leaving after it most glorious clouds tinged with celestial hues. Sometimes a lane of light, oft pearly and oft golden, would lead away from the coral ledges in front of our beach straight to the horizon's gates, and, in truth, it would appear to us that we saw before us the entrance-way to heaven. The wind by this time would have died away to merest zephyr, and the only sound—save always the brawlings of the buccaneers at a distance—would be the whisperings of the palm leaves o'erhead, as if in sweet communion together.

How peaceful and even heavenly were those moments, just at the death of day and birth of night! We would gaze at the spectacle without speaking, then turn with sighs to look into each other's faces. We never spake the word, but

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each knew that in the other's soul was a sense of divine restfulness, and in his heart a whispering of hope. Thus were our souls knitted together through sweet contemplation of God's glories as made manifest on earth.

We were not long to enjoy this idyllic state unmolested, as may be imagined; but, ere I narrate the dread events that were in store for us, let me speak of something else. Being by nature of an exploring turn of mind, I employed my spare time to investigate the isle and our immediate surroundings, always having before me the possible need of a place of retreat in case of emergency. It needs must be that I was supernaturally assisted in this, as will now appear, for one day I found a spot so well equipped by nature for defence (of a few against an army, peradventure) that I could see in its discovery but the finger of Providence.

I say I found it, but it was through John's agency, as will now appear. He one day fell from out the hammock to the floor of the hut,

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which being sand he was not much hurt, bat for the sand being a thin layer only above a ledge of rock. When his hip struck this spot he noted, despite the hurt resulting from said fall, that a sound was given forth, like as if he had struck on something hollow. And, in sooth, he had, for when he told me of his experience I at once investigated, and found that the rock beneath the sand was merely a thin slab, which, by exerting all my strength, I could e'en lift from its position.

It happened that this discovery was made about high noon, when all the people of the island, e'enmost, were indulging in that midday sleep which they of the Spanish islands term the "*siesta*." Fortunate it was for us, as the sequel will prove, that no one observed the lifting of the slab, as I will now relate. The flat rock covered the entrance or exit to a subterranean passageway, which beneath our hut was about five feet deep. It appeared a mere pit, the which, when I had let myself down into, disclosed an-

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other opening, about three feet high, which made off nearly horizontally in the direction of the cliffs behind us. I was for exploring the passageway at once, and, encouraged by John, procured a candle and went in alone, while he watched the entrance and concealed the opening by a blanket across the open doorway of the hut.

At first the passage was narrow, being like a fissure between ledges of rocks, with a roof formed by the wedging in of rocks fallen from above. These had ultimately become covered with soil and sand, and what was originally an opening out at the sea-level had also been filled with the washings up of the waves until it was entirely concealed. But who had discovered this exit and had dug the perpendicular pit that gave the concealed entrance into the horizontal passage? That at least was of artificial construction, as shown by the covering slab of rock.

This question bothered me some as I made my way cautiously along the drift, crawling between

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the natural walls on either side. But I resolved, be the discoverer alive or dead, to find out what lay at the other end of it. Nor did it take me long to reach the end of the passage, which after a short run had taken an upward course, showing that it had penetrated the backbone of the island formed by the mighty cliffs. Scrambling upward, over a series of steps, I at last stepped out, as it were, by a side-door into an immense cavern, so broad and high and altogether spacious that I could not, with my dim light, begin to ascertain its extent. A glimmer of daylight at the western end of the cavern attracted me thither, and I found a natural window in the rock, through which, though it was covered by a screen of vines, I got a glimpse of the sea, and found by that I was two or three hundred feet above the strand where the hut was situated.

CHAPTER IX

THE OLDEST BUCCANEER ALIVE

THE cavern I had so fortuitously discovered was evidently unoccupied, save by the bats and vampires that circled by the thousand o'erhead, the whirr of their wings, like to the sound of the sea, being at first disturbing. Whether or no there were other occupants I could not then ascertain, having to husband my candle for my return. It was enough for me, however, that this fine chamber was apparently vacant, and I was overjoyed at its discovery. Hither John and I could retreat, perchance, if sore pressed by foes, and I resolved to commence at once the collecting of ship's provisions, arms, ammunition and articles of comfort, and store them away in this cave. That would be for a

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while comparatively easy, so long as the pirates did not dislodge us from our hut or send us off on a cruise, for they had such o'er-abundance already stored in the island that they had not e'en given a thought to the provisions we had brought here aboard the "Nancy."

It did not take me long to make the return trip to the hut, and there, as soon as I had made the circuit outside and ascertained that there were no listeners, I communicated all the facts to John. And his eyes did dance and his exclamations were most joyous, as he learned of our treasure. "Oh, that we could go thither at once!" he exclaimed, again and again. "But no, we must be most careful."

"That in sooth must we," I cautioned him. "And the first thing is to so arrange the things within our hut as to conceal the opening withal." We did this by making a rude framework like a bedstead upon four legs about two feet high, and over which we cast palm leaves and dried seaweed, covering them with such clothing as

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would give the whole the appearance of a bed. Abjuring the hammock, thenceforth John reclined upon the couch; though the former was still swung o'erhead for use upon occasions. The flat stone was removed to one side, so that there should be free entrance afforded on emergencies, but a plank covering was put in its place, lest some suspicious dog might sniff beneath the bed and discover the pit. The island, by the way, swarmed with wild dogs, which were not by any means pleasant beasts to meet, especially in the night. Those dogs that still clung to their masters were scarcely less wild than the others, and were exceedingly acute, so we feared them with good cause.

A sea-chest, very heavy and cumbersome, was drawn up on the side next the door, and thus fended off observation of what was beneath the bed, while the usual litter of such a hut was enough to divert attention from the other side.

No objection was made to my getting ashore all the provisions I wanted from the vessel, nor

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were my packages inspected, so that in the course of the next week or so I had smuggled to the hut, and thence to the cave in the cliffs, many muskets, pistols and cutlasses, besides great store of powder, bullets, flints and fuses.

The floor of the cave, as I soon found, was covered with dry earth, and there was no dampness at all within; whatever we carried there would be in no danger of spoiling from that cause. It was exceeding difficult to transport all these things, and in addition many sacks of salted provisions, cassava bread such as the Indians make, and articles of clothing, through the narrow passageway; but at last I had accomplished it almost unaided, and, the time now having arrived when John could both stand and walk, I took him to view our snuggerly. I chose high noon, as usual, when everybody else was asleep; and yet I dared not venture to stay long, fearing some one might yet be prowling about and by chance enter the hut while we were away.

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It was worth all my toil to see the pleasure of the lad at his first glimpse of the great cavern, which for his benefit I illumined with the light of a torch. As the light gleamed on walls and pillars of crystal limestone, he uttered a cry of delight, for the picture was of surpassing beauty. And his joy was great, also, at sight of the various contrivances for comfort, especially the couches, and the vast store of provisions.

The light that shone through the seaward window was strong enough to illumine the cave without artificial aid, so I extinguished the torch and we sat awhile in silence, hand clasped in hand, looking out upon the sea. That window seat was to be a hallowed spot to me and to him, afterward whence he was to watch for my coming, and many a day and night in vain. It commanded a view of the whole harbor and far into the offing, so that we frequently had knowledge of a vessel's approach before those below us on the shore were aware of it.

When John and I emerged from the pit, and

were just about to crawl from out beneath the cot that covered its mouth, we received a shock that sent the blood tingling through our veins. For there in the doorway of the hut stood an old man, whistling softly to himself and gazing out to sea. He seemed not to see us, but we knew well that his indifference was feigned, for he had too shrewd a face to be unaware that we had just popped out of a hole beneath the bed. But he gave no sign that he had seen, other than his mere presence there, which was in itself disturbing, of course.

“Hello, youngsters,” he exclaimed in greeting, when we had finally risen from our recumbent position and stood erect, at the side of the bed opposite the door. “Thought I’d call to make friends with you, and, finding nobody to home, just waited till you come back. That’s right, wa’n’t it? I’m an old resider here in Tortuga, and you, I take it, are newcomers.”

We hardly knew how to meet him at first, we were so abashed at being discovered, and afraid

withal that he might betray us. But as he pulled out a jackknife from his pocket and began whittling most unconcernedly a piece of soft wood, in a manner that could not but put us at our ease, we quickly recovered our composure. We urged him to sit down, or swing in the hammock, as he might elect to do, but he preferred standing up to sitting, "if it's all the same to you," he remarked. "Kinder lonely here, ain't it?" was his next question.

We assured him that it was, and then, there being something very friendly in his appearance, we made no bones of entering freely into conversation with him, for which we were soon well rewarded, in sooth. He was about sixty years old, he told us, but his appearance betokened twenty years more, his face was so seamed with wrinkles; one eye was gone and a piece of one ear, and his nose had been broken. He was short and stout, and to his left limb, which had been cut off at the knee, was strapped a wooden leg.

"I'm a Yankee," he said, after we had

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settled down for a talk, "and you fellers, if I 'm not mistaken, are Britishers." We told him we were, and he nodded his head sagaciously. "Thought so. In fact, knew it. Could have told by the cut of your jibs. And, then ag'in, I 've heard something about your coming here, too. Guess I have, and the fight you put up for my brother buccaneers. It was a good one, too, and I don't mind telling you so to your faces. Could n't have done better myself, if I do say it. And, ag'in, I don't mind telling you that I 'm mighty glad you laid out a lot of them rascals, no matter if they were shipmates of mine, so to speak. They deserved all they got, and more, too, and, Mister Gilbert, I would like to shake your flipper. Shake, old man! By gum, it feels good to git an honest feller by the hand once more. It does, and no mistake. It 's more 'n twenty year sence I 've taken an honest man by the hand; for, let me tell you now, there ain't another one on this island! That 's a fact, sure 's my name 's Eli Herrick.

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Let me shake the youngster's hand, too. What 's the matter with him, anyway? He looks kinder peakid."

"Oh, one of your buccaneer friends was rough with him," I explained, "and he got a cut that may lay him up for a long time yet."

"And I would n't have been alive to-day if it had n't been for Humphrey," exclaimed John, eagerly. "He saved my life."

"He did, hey? Well, it was mighty good of him; but I don't know 's he did you any great favor, though, if you 've got to spend it here in Tortuga. Howsomever, while there 's life there 's hope, and though I have been here more 'n twenty year without seeing a chance to get away, seems to me we three ought to think up some sort of a scheme to outwit these var-mints. Don't you think so?"

John and I looked at each other without speaking, each asking with his eyes if this new-comer could be trusted. There was such a frank air about him that we could not but think so,

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and at last I said : " But where could we go, even if we could get away ? "

" Trust that to me, boys," answered the Yankee. " But I see you don't quite trust me yet ; do you ? No, don't say you do, for I don't expect it of you yit. There ain't no reason why you should trust me—that 's a fact ; but you 'll have to take me that way, anyhow. And while we 're about it, guess you might 's well tell me what you 've got stowed away under that cot there. Lucky for you it wa' n't some of the gang that come here while you were out of sight, for I expect it might get you into trouble with old Morgan. He 's always prying round a peeking into things that ain't none of his business, and if he wa' n't away, he and Mansvelt, on one of their piratical expeditions, guess you 'd look purty nice ; now, would n't you ? "

I saw there was nothing to do but make a clean breast of it, and tell him about the cave, into which, after we had assured ourselves that no one was coming, I took him on a hasty trip.

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He was penetrated with admiration, and exclaimed again and again: "Ah, this is just the place I've been looking for ever sence I got here. Now we will circumvent the whole lot of 'em; see if we don't. Just give us time enough, and we'll not only git away, but blame me if we don't take half their treasure with us; hey?"

"But, would that be right?" I inquired when he said this.

"Right, you goosey; of course, it would. Right enough, if only we can get the treasure; and I know where there's more 'n a million pounds' worth this very minute, stowed away up there in the cliffs. Right? Well, that makes me laugh! Whose treasure is it, hey? It ain't theirn, and, if we can get it, it's as much ours as 't is theirn. If we have it, perhaps some time we can return some of it to the rightful owners; though as to that, guess most of 'em are dead, killed while defending their prop'ty. The fact is, I've seen some of 'em murdered in cold blood, right before my eyes, and had to stand by and

help do it, too, or pretend to, else I 'd have got my throat cut quicker 'n a wink."

So it was settled before the visitor left us that we should make the cavern a repository of all sorts of things that might be useful to us in the future, including as much of the pirates' treasure as we could lay our hands on. Our Yankee friend was determined on this, and he had his way, despite my scruples. It really seemed to me like taking that which belonged to another, as I mentioned to him.

"Yes, so it does," he assented; "but the question is to find out who that other is! It's as likely to be you or me as anyone else; ain't it? The plunder these scoundrels have gathered together here comes from every p'int of the compass: some of it from Spanish galleons sailing up from the Isthmus, some from other treasure ships from Mexico bound for Spain, some from English ships, some from French and some from Dutch; some again from the sacking of cities on the Main. Now, whose plunder is it,

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think you? Is it these pirates' plunder more 'n yours or mine, prithee? No, forsooth, it now belongs to him with the keenest wit or strongest arm. And if our wits more than match their arms, it belongs to us! Now, that 's logic, as my old grandsire was wont to say. It 's the logic of might makes right!"

It turned out on further conversation that our friend was an American sailor, a Yankee fisherman, as he was used to proudly say, who could turn his hand to anything, "and do it as well as the next one." Born on a seaside farm and nurtured as much on the sea as on land, he was a queer compound of independence and shrewd wit. He had been used, he said, to look out for himself from the time he could walk, and before he was my age he was aboard a fisherman as cook's assistant. At sixteen, taking a winter cruise to the West Indies, he was overhauled by the buccaneers and sold into slavery—as will further appear.

"But they hain't killed me, and, mark my

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word, I 'll see the last mother's son of 'em hanged yet to some yardarm or other. For my father was a soldier as well as a sailor, and he and I fit with Gen'ral Pepperell before the walls of Louisburg."

"And mine," said I, "was in the army of King Charles at Naseby."

"And my father," piped in John, "was in Cromwell's gallant army."

CHAPTER X

HOW THE WHITE SLAVE PURCHASED HIS FREEDOM

“OH, ho,” laughed Eli Herrick. “Here ’s a pretty kettle of fish: A Yankee, a Roundhead and a Cavalier! Each one of us had a soldier for a father, and each one fought for a different cause.”

“But each one fought for the right, as he thought then,” said John.

“Well, maybe; we won’t quarrel about it. The fact remains that he *fit* and was a soldier, and that we, the sons of soldiers, ought to have enough fighting blood in our veins to give us a little glory on our own account. What say you, friend Humphrey Gilbert?”

“I say, I’ve had enough of fighting, and would much rather run away.”

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“Don’t believe it; anyway, your record **don’t** show it. Howsomever, you ’ll get your fill of fighting ere you get out of this piratical trap. Mind your eye, now, this is sure as preaching.”

By this we were outside the hut, sitting in the shade of the palms. The sun beat down fiercely upon the sands, but the sea-breeze blew freshly upon us and made the air gratefully cool. Reclining on the sands, John and I listened to Eli Herrick, as he told us what he knew of the island and its people, intermixed with some account of himself. First, he told us he came to have such liberty that day on account of his companions being all engaged in a foray upon the neighboring island of Haiti, which lay, large and beautiful to the view, across a two-league channel to the south and east. They had had some trouble with the planters there, and such of them as were not off on the cruise with Morgan and Mansvelt had taken their boats in order to descend upon the main island. Eli Herrick had watched his opportunity to escape from going on the foray—for it was no

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quarrel of his own, he said—and had slipped over to our side of the island to satisfy his curiosity as to ourselves. He had heard of what we had done, and in a measure who we were, but wanted to see for himself.

“Now, you must know,” he said in the beginning, “this island we are now on is called Tortuga, inasmuch as it is said to somewhat resemble in shape a great sea-turtle, for which the Spanish is *Tortuga de Mar*. They tell me it was first found by a wise old Spaniard called Christopher Columbus, who has the name of having discovered America; though as to that I don’t know, not having had much education—leastwise only such as I have picked up at sea.”

“Yes, said John, “that’s what I’ve read in the history, and he came here in 1492, sailing back to Spain with the first information the Europeans ever had of these islands.”

“Well, then, that goes,” rejoined Eli Herrick. “So far so good. Chris., he come here and he give the name to this island. Then he sailed

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across the channel on the south of it, and put in at the larger island of Haiti—which you can see any time you want to by climbing up them rocks and looking to the s'uthard. They say the Spaniards had it all their own way in these waters till about a hundred year ago, when along come an old nigger stealer named Hawkins, who had made a voyage to the coast of Africa, and where he filled up his ships with blackamoors and brought t'em to the Spanish islands to sell. He did so well that another Britisher called Drake—I always remember his name because it reminds me of duck—”

“And I remember it,” I broke in, “because he was from my own Devonshire, and he was a gallant knight.” At which words of mine John nodded hearty assent; for he too was from Devon, and our eyes filled at the thoughts of those we had left behind us there.

“That so?” asked Eli Herrick, carelessly, not feeling the full import of the words to us. “Well, your gallant knight, Sir Francis, played

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ducks and drakes with the Spaniards, so an old sailor told me, and is somewhat responsible for the war that followed between his country and Spain. Howsomever, things went from bad to wuss after the English privateers got into the Caribbean Sea, and along about thirty or forty years ago some French and English settlers in the island of Saint Kitts, over to the east'ard of here, were set upon by a Spanish Don and driven from their plantations. Some of 'em sailed away, and finally brought up at this here island of Tortuga, where they met some gallant tars, and formed a sort of combination against the Jack Spaniards. Some were French, and some were Dutch, and some ag'in were Britishers; but all were desp'rit men, every mother's son of 'em—made so by the acts of the Spaniards. And inasmuch as the Spaniards had done them all injury, so they leagued themselves together ag'inst 'em. And that's how this band of pirates began that you find on this island to-day.

“Fust they were called ‘Filibusteros’ by the

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Spaniards, because of the little boats they used, or 'filibotes,' but after awhile they got to be known as buccaneers, or boucaniers, which an old sailor who was one of 'em told me meant 'Meat Smokers.' You see, it come about in this way : When there got to be a consid'ble number of 'em, they divided up into three sorts or parties, one to plant, one to hunt, and the other to roam the sea. The party that hunted gen'rally went over to Haiti, where the woods are full of wild cattle, and there they killed the animals and smoked the meat for bringing it over here and preserving it when at sea. Now, the smoking of the meat is called by the Indians who live over there 'Boucan,' and so that 's the way the Boucaniers got their name. But you may call 'em by any name you choose, my boys, and there is only one word fits 'em, and that is PIRATE—and write it big !

“How many are there here now, when all are to home? Oh, about fifteen hundred, all told, big and little pirates and prisoners, boys and girls,

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women and Injun salvages. 'Nough of 'em, by the blue blazes !

"How 'd I get here? Well, friend Humphrey, I did n't swim, bet your boots; and I did n't come of my own accord, any more 'n you did, I guess. B'lieve I told you that the vessel I was in was taken off the north coast of Haiti, the cap'n, mate, and most of the sailors murdered in cold blood, and a few of us saved and brought here. I call it being kidnapped; don't know 's you do. Howsomever, that 's about the size of it. And not only was I kidnapped, but when I got here I was sold a slave to one of the boucaniers.

"Did he treat me well? Look here." Our friend rose to his feet, stripped off his shirt and showed us his bare back, which was striped with welts and scarred in divers places. Oh, it was a horrible sight, and I grieved that this old man should have suffered so much. Both John and myself showed our sympathy by the tears that welled to our eyes, and by our exclamations, at which Eli Herrick was greatly touched. He

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gripped our hands, as they were extended to him, and he looked into our faces and burst into tears. Then he sank to the sand again and buried his face in his hands, sobbing bitterly the while.

“Dang it all,” he burst forth at last, drawing the back of his hand across his eyes; “I never meant for any man or boy ever to see me cry. But you are the first humans in many long years who have spoken words of sympathy to me. And though my master lashed me till my back was raw, then rubbed into the bleeding wounds the juice of lemons, mixed with salt and pepper, yet he never saw me cry nor heard me beg for mercy. Ah, God, but it is good to weep! Why did he lash me? Who knows but the divel? He was himself a fiend, if ever there was one, but no worse than the rest. They are all divels. But this one—ah, but I shall give his blood for dogs to drink ere I get through with him! He thinks I have forgot. Forgot? Ha, ha!”

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Eli Herrick's face was working with wrath, his fists clenched and his chest heaving with excitement, as he rose to draw on his shirt. And I blamed him not; more, I aided and abetted him in the design he later concerted against his former masters.

“How did I get my liberty?” he said at last, repeating our inquiries after his wrath had somewhat cooled. “Well, such liberty as I have came to me through purchase. The hound thought he had killed me after stripping and tying me to a tree and lashing me until I fainted from loss of blood. He placed me in the hands of a chirurgion (surgeon or doctor) who, seeing that there was yet hope of life, and feeling somewhat of compassion for me, offered my master seventy pieces of eight for me, which he eagerly accepted. Under the chirurgion's care I recovered, but only to find in him a hardly less cruel master than the other, though he did not beat me. I was nearly naked, scarred—as you have seen me—worn down to the bone; and even though I

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gained strength again, I was such a sorry sight that my new master repented of his bargain.

“Now, about this time, as I was prowling about by myself, seeking only to get well, I was mercifully assisted by Providence: that is, I found the hiding-place of a coffer containing more 'n a thousand pieces of eight. Taking out two hundred pieces of eight, I returned the coffer to its hiding-place and went to seek my master, with a new hope in my heart. I knew what he had paid for me, and when I offered him for my liberty one hundred pieces of eight he jumped at the bargain at once. But he repented him when he had got the money almost in his hands, thinking to get other pieces of eight, perchance a hundred more. But I was wary, bitter experience having taught me its lesson; hence I had brought him only fifty at the first, having buried the other fifty in the sand, and the remaining hundred eke in yet another spot. So when he haggled with me he got nothing for his pains, and finally, in the presence

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of witnesses, he agreed to take what I offered him and sign a release.

"You have heard perhaps that there is honor among thieves. Well, it is true that there is a certain sort of honor here. I am now a free man, and no one durst enslave me again. But still we are all in slavery of the most foul kind, being bound by oath to serve our leaders in whatsoever service they shall command. The penalty of disobedience is death; but other than this there is nothing to fear. Death is nothing once you are used to it; hey?"

Eli Herrick was in reckless mood from thinking upon the sufferings he had endured, perchance, and when I replied: "We should have no fear of this life's death, only death of the soul," he rejoined: "Oh, you ought to be a parson! I can see it by the cut of your jib. But preachin' don't go down on this island, so let me warn you fellers. Not that I 'm ag'in it, but the others are.

"Howsomever, do as you please; only if you

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preach you 'll get your head taken off in short meter. And, friends Humphrey and John, I don't want that to happen. You're the fust friends I've found sence I joined the 'Brethren of the Sea.' You hain't been taken in yet; but soon 's the leaders get back you'll have to take the oath and sign the articles, or walk the plank, so you'd better be making up you minds. My advice is to do it; for an oath under compulsion, you know, don't count, and a lie to a pirate is rather a credit—provided you make anything by it. That's our code of morals, or a leaf out of the book, and I quote it for your benefit."

John and I were too depressed to make answer, seeing which the good fellow tried to cheer us up: "Come," he said, rising and stretching himself, "take a climb with me to the top of the cliffs, and I'll show you a bit of paradise. Take the boy by one arm, friend Humphrey, and I'll take him by the other, and 'twixt the two of us he will get there soon as we do."

After a hard climb over the rough rocks,

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taking many a rest for breathing spells, ever and anon stopping also to look at the fair view outspread with ever increasing extent at our feet, we finally arrived at what may be truly called the backbone of the island of Tortuga. The rock was covered with soil along the ridge, and great trees grew thereon—trees that rose up high toward the clouds and spread their giant limbs athwart. They were hung with long vines like tangled ropes, and many strange plants sat astride their branches decked with gorgeous flowers.

Peering through the open space betwixt the trees, we could see off on either side the island, northwest and southeast; below us the little harbor, where our ill-fated "Nancy" lay rocking on the swell, a toy ship in the distance. But southwardly was the grandest view of all, for there was no horizon, as on the north, it being interrupted by the great island of Haiti, which the Spaniards named Hispaniola, extending as far as the eye could reach. Our island of Tortuga was but twenty miles in length, and the

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eye could measure it e'enmost ; but that of Haiti was vast as well as beautiful. Purple mountains rose above the clouds, beneath which were broad areas of vivid greens, black gulches and ravines, dense forests, sparkling rivers in cascades, waterfalls, hurrying toward the coast, where curving beaches of white sand lay between the blue sea and the fields. We would fain have gazed on this fair scene for hours—John and I—but hardly had we swept it once over with a glance when our friend pulled us back. “Down, down!” he said ; “the pirates are returning!”

CHAPTER XI

THE BRETHREN OF THE SEA

THE placid sea that washed the coast of Haiti was alive with small boats, such as in the olden time gave to the buccaneers the name of "fleibotiers," or freebooters, from the Dutch "fleibotes." They seemed to be pushing out from a beautiful bay about two leagues across from our isle; but, of a sudden, as a puff of smoke shot up from the woods ashore, they turned them again to land, as if the conflict they had been engaged in was about to be resumed. We had lingered to note this much, and seeing it Eli Herrick burst out laughing.

"It was a false alarm," he said, "and the rascals are not yet coming back. Let us sit down here beneath this huge tree, where we can

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command a view of all that happens over there, and while you have before you the scene of some of the boucaniers' bloodiest battles, I will relate what I know of our famous forerunners. For we are ourselves boucaniers, you know, whether of our choice or perforce; so those who founded the brotherhood are surely of interest to us.

"I told you how the boucaniers came to fortify here and how they got their name, but of their rash exploits I have as yet said naught. Right over there, on those smiling slopes of Haiti, they first gained the name of 'boucaniers,' for there is where they went to hunt wild hogs and cattle and where they 'boucanned' their flesh. The island swarmed with animals which had run wild after escaping from the Spaniards, who were the first settlers on that island. Up in the hills, but far, far out of sight, is their old city of Santiago, which they founded soon after discovering the island, and named in honor of their great war-saint, Tiago, or James; and over on the south coast is the capital city, Santo Do-

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mingo, founded, they tell me, by Bartholomew, a brother of Chris. Columbus. Howsomever, the Spaniards have been there more than one hundred and seventy years, and though they now hold but a tithe of what they once possessed, having shrunk into their cities' walls, like a turtle within its shell, owing to our depredations, they still hold the forts and strongest places.

“The boucaniers, then, were the hunters on land, but they were in partnership with the hunters by sea, who were called fleibotiers, or freebooters, and all together were joined into one great band known as the Brethren of the Sea. When the men of one class grew tired of murdering or hunting, as the case might be, they would get a change by adopting the other pursuit, so there was no real distinction between the two, after all. I have been a boucanier, and also a fleibotier, but of the two I much prefer the wild life of the woods.

“Who was the first freebooter? Well, that is hard to tell; but old Stumpy told me that they

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called him Pierre le Grand, or Peter the Great, and he was a native of Normandy in France—”

“Who was old Stumpy?”

“Now, friends, if you keep interrupting me I sha’n’t get on with my story before our brethren over there return; and that means there won’t be any time at all, perhaps, to tell it. But, I will say old Stumpy is a pirate with a wooden leg, a great crony of mine, who is probably the oldest boucanier in the world—that is to say, in Tortuga. He is pensioned off on account of his record and his wounds, received in past battles, and lives in a little hut on the east side, down near unto the sea. Now, don’t ask me how he lost his leg, nor anything else to interrupt, for some time I will take you over to see him, and you can get it all from him. But let me warn you he ain’t a pretty man to look at, nor a nice one to listen to, either. He is chipped up almost into little bits, has lost an eye, an ear, a piece of his nose, three or four fingers, and two toes off of the only leg he ’s got left!

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“Now, as I was about to say, the very first boucanier who made a great name for himself was Peter the Great, and he was a frog-eater from Normandy who drifted out here somehow or other, and was always cruising about a-looking for trouble. He was a fleibotier, and went about with a band of cutthroats just as bad as he was.

“Well, one time they had been out so long that all their dried beef was eaten up and their water nearly gone; in fact, they were in a desprit case, when, just in the nick of time, along comes a big three-decker galleon, one of the king of Spain’s treasure-ships, and what does Peter the Great do but resolve to take it. And he in his little bit of a fleibote, too—just think of that! Oh, he was a corker, he was; don’t care a bit if he was a frog-eater. Well, his men they backed him up, for they were that desprit they would have tackled anything alive, I guess, and so they run alongside the three-decker and hailed her. Their fleibote was so small the men on the galleon had n’t taken no

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notice of her at all, and when the watch reported to the capt'in that there was a bit of a boat below hailing the ship, he said with a laugh: 'Oh, h'ist 'em aboard ;' and darned if they did n't throw Peter a rope and take him in tow. It was about dusk at that time, and them on deck, being so high up above the water, could n't see what was happening below, and the next thing they knew they did n't know nothing, so to speak : for what does Pete and the other pirates do but each one takes a cutlass between his teeth, jams his belt full of pistols, and climbs up the ship's side like monkeys up a cocoanut tree.

"Su'prised? You just bet they were—them Dagos on deck—and before they rallied Pete and his gang was onto 'm, cut and slash, bangity-bang, until they had laid out every mother's son in sight. Then they made for the cabin, where the high muckamuck of the galleon, Señor Don Something-or-Other, was a-playing cards (monte, prob'ly) and drinking wine to the king's taste. Pell-mell down the cabin steps tumbled Pete,

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and his crew close behind him, cutlasses atween their teeth and a pistol in each hand, and they did n't say nothing, but just stood there with the noble Don and his friends under cover.

“‘Caramba carambola, Santa Maria purissima,’ etcetery, etcetery, spluttered the noble Don, looking up from his cards. ‘What ’s this, all hell emptied itself into my ship?’

“‘That ’s about the size of it,’ replied Pete the Great—and he was well named, too, I vum—‘That ’s about the size of it, and this here ’s the divel himself come to call you down’—or words to that effect.

“Well, blame me if all them Don Dagos did n't crawl, and the upshot of it was the great galleon, with its belly full of silver ingots from the mines of Peru, on the way to fill the King of Spain's treasury at Seville, became the prize of Peter the Great. He knew a gentleman when he saw him, Pete did, and he said to the noble Don and his friends, says he: ‘There ain't nothing mean about me, there ain't, and I 'm going to

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swap my ship for yourn. Fair exchange is no rob'ry, and I ain't no robber, so I 'll put you and your officers into the fleibote and take charge of this here galleon.' Which he did, though, of course, the noble Don and the rest kicked like goats.

"But what 's the good? They were bundled into the fleibote, with water and provisions enough to last 'em to Cuby—which was only a day's sail off—and Peter and his gallant crew brought the galleon into port. Yes, brought her into our little harbor there, right where that vessel of yourn lays now.

"But he did n't stay there, Peter did n't. He was of the sort that knowed when he had enough, Pete was, and he soon set sail for France, where Stumpy says he set himself up for a gentleman, and is there now, for aught that I know.

"It happened that the King of France and the King of Spain were at odds, and so Peter's little game was winked at and called a mighty

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cute sort of privateering ; whereas, if bigwigs had n't been at odds, it would have been called piracy, and Peter might have adorned the end of a rope at a yardarm aboard a man-of-war.

“ There 's all the difference imagin'ble in a name, you know. It don't matter how many men you kill, s' long 's you do it under the right name. But now you just bear in mind that there ain't no war between England and Spain right now, and if we kill any Jack Spaniards, and are taken by a king's ship, we 're mighty likely to hang for it, short meter, by gum !

“ Was Stumpy with 'em, and if so why did n't he cut stick and go to France with Peter ? Yes, he was, but inasmuch as that was where he lost his leg and had one of his eyes put out, he wa'n't in a fit condition to leave. He just had to stay, and see Pete walk off with the yellow boys. And that 's gen'r'lly the case : the master gets the treasure and the common sailor gets the whacks and bruises.

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“Any more pirates do anything after that? Well, I should say so. There was more ’n you could shake a stick at in a week of Sundays, and, what ’s more, they’re at it still, just as farce as ever. Now, there was a one they called Bart. Portugues, Stumpy told me, because he come from Portugal. It ain’t often that a dog ’ll eat dog; but this Portuguese Dago one time run across a Spanish Dago, and licked him clean out of his boots, so to speak.

“He had a fleitbote with four little guns in it and a crew of thirty men, and was cruising on the south coast of Cuby, when he run up ag’inst a big Spaniard of twenty guns and seventy men. He could n’t get away, so he up and gives battle, with the result that he took the big feller, after losing half his men; but he did n’t care for that. His prize had about a hundred thousand pieces of eight aboard and a cargo of a hundred and twenty thousand cocoanuts.

“He tossed his captives and the cocoanuts overboard and set sail for Tortuga, but was

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unfort'nit enough to run into a fleet of Spanish ships and was taken red-handed. He and all his crew were made prisoners; but instead of hanging 'em on the spot, as they ought to have done, the Dons set sail for Campeche, in order to have the execution legal like—or most likely to give their friends ashore a share in the fun—and so Bart. Portugues stabbed the sentry that was set on him, leaped overboard and somehow escaped. At all events, Stumpy says he did n't get drowned; but wa'n't no good after that, not being able to get any following, and so died a fugitive, after all his daring.

“Then there was Pierre Francois, who, with a small boat and about the same number of men that Peter the Great had, attacked the pearl fleet off the Spanish Main. This fleet was guarded by a man-of-war, but Francois sought out the ship having the richest cargo of pearls, valued at more than fifty thousand pieces of eight, and would have made off with her if her mainmast had n't gone by the board in a gale of wind. As he

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had scuttled his own vessel, there he was, at the man-of-war's mercy, which bore down upon him and recaptured his prize. But somehow the boucanier made terms with the Spanish vice-admiral and got off scot free, only losing two ships by the venture, his own and the one he had taken.

“Who do I s'pose was the very wust pirate that ever lived here? Well, that 's a hard question to answer, I vum. They 're all bad enough, just you fix that in your noddles; but p'raps there wa'n't no wusser pirate ever breathed than Roche Braziliano. That 's what the Spaniards called him, the Brazilian Rock, because he was hard as a rock and had lived in Brazil.

“And how he did hate the Spaniards, to be sure! Why, he terrorized the whole caboodle of 'em all the way from the Gulf of Paria to Darien. And no wonder, either, for one time he caught a lot of Spaniards and roasted 'em alive on spits before open fires in the forest. And all

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because they would n't, or could n't, tell him where their droves of hogs were kept.

“ Ah, he sacked lots of cities on the Main and he gained a lot of treasure ; but he squandered it all in riotous living. Why, he did n't think nothing of coming here and throwing away more 'n ten thousand pieces of eight in a single night of drunken revelry. He would order all the puncheons of rum and casks of wine rolled out on the beach, then have their heads knocked in, and what he and his cutthroats could n't drink they throwed away. Ah, it was sinful, the way he got his money and the way he squandered it. And his life went the same way. So far as I know, he never got punished for his sins—leastwise not in this world—unless dying the death of a drunkard was the punishment, which is mighty likely.

“ But there was one man who could beat him all holler in deeds of blood, and he, I know, received his reward in kind. That was Francis Lolonois, another frog-eater, and he was perhaps

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the bloodiest cutthroat that ever walked in shoe-leather. Stumpy says he was with him when he made his first captures, some small Spanish vessels. The governor of the island they had sailed from sent a war frigate after him, and that made Lolonois so mad that he turned to and captured that same vessel, though it was four times as big as his craft and five times as well manned. And he did n't stop with the taking of the frigate, but he cut off the head of every man on it but one, and him he sent to the governor with the message that he was soon coming to cut his off, too. I don't know whether he did it or not; but if he did n't he took it out of other miserable Spaniards, for he never let any person escape, but beheaded or hanged all his prisoners—and he prob'ly captured hundreds, some say thousands.

“He must have taken half a dozen Spanish cities, I s'pose, and made millions out of his prizes. Why, in his expedition against Maracaibo he got confessions from the leading citizens by

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torture as to where they had concealed their treasures, and when he come away he not only left a wake of blood behind, but brought more 'n three hundred thousand pieces of eight, besides silver plate and jewels equal to as much more.

“ But I 'm glad to say this pirate got his reward at last, and it was just the one he deserved, too, as I look at it. On his very next v'yage, when he was repeating his game in Nicaragua, he and his crew were set upon by Indians and tortured, as they had tortured hundreds of others. Lolonois was torn limb from limb, and each arm and leg was burned in his sight while he was still alive. That was an awful fate, but he brought it on himself, sure.

“ Makes you shudder; don't it? Well, I don't blame you a bit. I used to shiver myself when Stumpy first told me these tales; but we get sorter used to 'em after awhile. They may say what they like about the boucaniers, but there's one thing certain: they ain't any of 'em afraid of resking their lives. I

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don't like 'em, but I must say they ain't any of 'em cowards.

"What you say? You hope there wa'n't any more. Bless your innercent faces, I hain't begun to tell you yet of 'em all. Why, there 's old Jaques Michel, he was with Lolonois at Maracaibo, and one of the wust ones there, too, and he 's here to-day. He was wounded in the hip, but, though he got hurt, he has the reputation of being tol'ably humane.

"Strange, ain't it? He won't hurt a fly, yet he 'll go off on a trip where he 's sure of shedding human blood without saying a word. I must take you over to see old Jaques some time. In fact, they 's a lot of int'resting people on this island that you ought to know. There 's Mister Morgan, for example. He 's a jolly lark—he is. Nobody knows how he raised himself to his present place, right up even with Capt'in Mansvelt; but there he is, and there ain't persons lacking who say he 's bound to be our real leader before long.

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“What, you ’ve seen him? Well, I don’t care; you ain’t seen a great sight. He was born a farmer’s boy, they say, and now he ’s a sailor he ain’t nothing but a big, overgrown lout. And then there ’s Mounseer Mansvelt himself; you know all about him. Ag’in, there was Illiger, another frog-eater; Van Horne, the Dutchman, and ‘Terror’ Johnson, the Britisher; three of a kind, but all of different country; so there ain’t much to boast of. I will say, though, that there ain’t never been any Yankee boucanier except me, that I know of, and I ain’t one through any fault of mine.

“But the Brethren are really on their way back now, and so we ’d better be gettin’ down. And look there—over to west’ard—blamed if Morgan and Mansvelt ain’t coming back, too, all sail set and headed licketty-split for the harbor. Let ’s get down before they land, for they may want to see us, you know, and when them critters send for us there ain’t but one thing to do, and that is to go mighty sudden.”

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So we went down to the beach, John and I in a daze at having heard so much of so many disreputable neighbors, but not doubting the truth of the report in the least.

CHAPTER XII

HOW A FAIR MAIDEN WAS RESCUED

WE were as though in a beleaguered castle, or in a ship attacked on either side, for the pirates were coming toward us from the north and from the south. We descended on the north side of the island, toward the harbor to which the vessels under command of Morgan and Mansvelt were hastening and straining all their canvas. They had been gone during all the time I have covered in my narration—that is, since we had been left in peace.

Uneasy we felt, of course, at the prospect of their coming, not knowing what was now in store for us, but being sure it was to our disquieting. But, as Eli Herrick said, they would

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have other things than concern about us to take up their attention, and perhaps we would escape their observation for a while.

“And while they are engaged in unlading their craft,” said he, “I am going to remove all my ‘plunder’ to the vacant hut next yours, so we can be within hail when the storm breaks, you know. You two lambs ain’t able to take care of yourselves, and will eftsoon need my help.

And before we get to be near neighbors I want you both to practice calling me Eli for short. I can’t stand being called ‘Mister Eli Herrick,’ as if I was an esquire or mate of a ship. So if you don’t call me Eli, there ’ll be trouble ’twixt me and you. And I ’m going to call you ‘Hump’ and the wee one ‘Jack ;’ so there ’s no use talking any more about it. Hump you are and Jack he is !”

Thus “Hump” I was, and John was “Jack,” while, “for short,” the Yankee boucanier would have it, he was ever after “Eli.” It did not

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matter, of course, for the familiarity that breedeth contempt cometh not of the bestowal of names, but of the spirit.

However, let us not linger at these details. Suffice it that the pirates brought their vessels into the harbor, and no sooner were the sails furled and the anchors cast than over the rails swarmed a horde of "brethren" into the small boats, and some in their eagerness to get ashore even dropped into the water and swam. John and I watched them through the crevices in our hut, while, as for Eli, he busied himself at setting his house in order, paying no attention whatever to the recent arrivals, who spread over the beach, some, and others made for their habitations.

The last boatloads to come ashore were composed of a score or more of dejected individuals who seemed to be captives, as indeed they were: Spaniards who had been taken with the two strange galleons, that were by now being warped into the harbor. These poor wretches were

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bundled out of the boats and driven a ways up the sands, where they were told to remain, at peril of being shot if they moved away. And there they sat the rest of the day, scarce daring to move for fear of their captors ; which showed that there had been a fearful time at the taking of their ships.

Eli went out to look the captives over, and when he returned reported that they were mostly common sailors, but that among them was a Spanish Don of high degree, who even then looked "as fierce as a meat axe," though his hands were tied behind him, and a beautiful young girl, perhaps his daughter ; besides another woman, evidently of humbler birth, who was probably her maid. They all had been cast upon the sands as though they were bundles of old clothes and by no means entitled to any consideration.

"The galleon they were in," said Eli, "made a hard fight against both our vessels, and several of our men were killed before the brethren

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carried her by boarding; and both Morgan and Mounseer were so enraged that they put nearly all the crew to the sword, reserving these they brought to the island for the sport of shooting on the morrow. They would have killed them all then and there, but our pretty men protested that it wa'n't fair that those of us at home should n't have a share in the 'fun,' so the poor critters have been saved for shooting here on shore."

John and I expressed the horror we felt, and I began to have that creepy sensation at the roots of my hair, which I knew to be but the precursor to some deed of mine that I would not commit when in my normal state. In sooth, Eli noticed that my expression changed, and he seemed to divine instanter what it meant, for he said: "Ha, I see by thy face, friend Humphrey, that thou wouldst go out and fight the brethren, all, peradventure it might avail, and, indeed, that thou art nerved to die if needs be in defence of the defenceless. Am I right?"

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"I don't know," I replied, absently, but clutching tightly my cutlass the while. "Truly a strange feeling possesses me. I seem to be clutched by a dæmon, in sooth, that moves me at its will. It must not be, Eli, this killing of those innocent people. We must prevent it, by whatever means in our power."

"We can't do it. Leastwise, we can't prevent the shooting of the men. But I tell you what I'm going to attempt, if you'll aid me, and that is the rescue of the women. It shan't be said of a Herrick that he allowed a woman to be shot down while he stood by alive. It would be impossible to save the whole lot, Hump, but perhaps we can cut out the women, if to-night is dark and we use discretion."

"Anything, Eli, so we do what in us lies. I would save them all if possible; and perhaps it may be yet. Are you sure they will be shot?"

"On the morrow, at sunrise, by Mounseer's orders. That's what old Jaques told me. He

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is one of the guards—the only one that 's sober, in fact. He watches till midnight, when he is relieved, and the third watch is the one that is to do the shooting. That is, if all are not drunk ; and it will be something unusual if they ain't.

“Heaven grant they may be,” I ejaculated.

“May I be shot if they ain't ! ” retorted Eli, significantly.

“But what difference will it make ? The brethren can't stay drunk all the time, now, can they ? And when they sober up, whether it's to-morrow morning, or noon, or night, the capt'in's orders will be carried out, or he will know what 's what ! You know that, Hump.”

“I fear me, yes. Then, Eli, what we do must be done between the coming of dusk and midnight. The sooner the better, for as I am now I feel that my heart will burst for the strain that is on me.”

“The lust of fighting, Hump ; that 's what 't is. You just want to up and slay somebody. If it 's a pirate, all right ; but it has to be some-

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body. I wish a certain individooal that I used to know, the feller that scarred my back, may run up ag'inst you to-night, Hump. It would save me the trouble of killing him, that 's all!"

"Don't, Eli, don't. Not for worlds would I have the stain of blood on my soul. But yet those poor people must be saved, even if per-chance some blood be shed."

"Trust me for the planning of it. We won't do anything ha'sh to old Jaques, for I can fix him all right. He 's an old crony of mine. But I tell you now it won't be a bit of use trying to free 'em all. There 'll be a pretty how-de-do if we try it. So just leave it all to me and obey my orders to the letter. Hear?"

"Yes, I 'll try to; but it is awful, just the thought of leaving even two or three of them to their fate!"

"Just so, just so; but we 'll do the best we can. Let her go at that. But what 's the lamb gawking at. Here 's Jack drinking in every word we said, and not a word he says in

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reply. What say, lamb—will you fight, too? Speak up, my hearty. You never do say anything, anyway. Come, talk a little.”

The boy shrank back abashed, for he was, in sooth, a timid youth. He came and put his arm around me; and I loved him the more for his timidity, together with his confidence in me, withal; but he said nothing then, only later whispered: “Don’t leave me alone long, dear Humphrey, and don’t run any too great risk.”

“Tush, tush, sweetheart, wouldst have us abandon a fair maiden in distress? Hast no sisters of thine own, Jack? Truly I know thou hast one, and fair she is, too, on my word.”

At these words of mine, which were cruel of premeditation—for I wished to nerve him to the task of assisting us—the tears sprang straightway to his eyes, but yet the words failed not of their mission.

“Go, then, thou and Eli,” he said, “and the while I will pray that no harm befall. I will be brave, Humphrey, I will; but—but—”

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"I know, sweetheart, I know. Thou wishest me clear of all bloodguiltiness. Heaven grant so it may eventuate. But I am in God's hands, Jack, dear. Whatsoever befalleth must be for the best. So rest thyself in mind while we are absent, and be ready to assist us swiftly if so be thou 'rt needed when we return."

"That I will, Humphrey, dear. I 'll stand guard and watch the exit of the cave, peradventure thou 'lt need quickly to enter."

"That you must, youngster," said Eli, speaking brusquely. "Now, Hump, let us take a bite and a snifter to strengthen us for the fray. Are the pistols primed and the cutlasses of keen edge? Well and good; now set forth the prog, for verily I feel an appetite. I am *faim*, as our friend Mounseer has a habit of saying. What, not eat, Hump? Guess you 'll get used to a sniff of blood bymbye, when you 're as old as I am and have been here as long. Makes you heartsick at the thought of it, hey? Well, don't blame you a bit. Felt the same way my-

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self, not only once but many times. But now I 'm hardened."

Had the occasion been less serious I might have smiled ; but, truth to say, I was far from feeling light of heart, and took his manner seriously. So did Jack, I ween, and when a tear from his eye splashed on the back of Eli's hand, as he was attending upon his wants at our rude board, the Yankee laid aside his bluster and bravado at once. Leaping to his feet, he threw an arm around Jack's shoulders and pressed him to his breast. "Don't cry, youngster," he said, huskily ; "it 'll come out all right. Just pray for us both, and—and keep your eye peeled. When you hear us coming, have the pit's opening clear and the torches ready for lighting. For there 'll be no time to lose. Now I 'll run out and take a survey," he continued, gently releasing the astonished lad, and snatching up a brace of pistols, which he pushed into his belt. "It 's dark enough now for me to reconnowter without being seen, and if I find only old Jaques

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on guard the rest is easy. See this bottle, lads? It's filled with the wine of Xeres, which old Jaques loves as his life. Don't know why, I'm sure; I never took to it, nor to any other liquor but the fiery water. But no matter, it's dosed with something else that he don't know about, and warranted to put him to sleep in the wink of a bat's eye. Kinder mean trick to play on a crony, ain't it? But all 's fair in a game of this sort. If I get the old man into trouble, I'll have to get him out, that 's all. So-long. Wait here, Hump."

Eli slid out into the dusk, and Jack and I sat at the hut's mouth in dread suspense. The lad's head sank to my shoulder, and I will confess that my heart was filled with pain; but I said nothing, fearing that which might unnerve me for my part, and which I was ready to play, come what would. So it was with great relief that I heard my name whispered from the dark outside the hut, and knew Eli had returned.

"It 's all right," said he, looming up large in

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the doorway. "Better 'n I had reckoned on, for what d' you s'pose? There ain't nary a boucanier in sight; and, more 'n that, all the Spanish sailors have been taken away t' other side the island, leaving the Don and the two women alone on the sands. Greatest luck in the world, sure 's preachin'. Could n't been done better if I 'd arranged the whole thing myself.

"There ain't nothing to do now, Hump, except to march out with me and invite the Don and his friends into our cave. That 's resky, I know, 'cause, of course, we 'll be s'pected, and there 'll be a mighty how-de-do. So, if you mis-doubt the scheme, Hump, say so right now."

"No, no, let 's get them out of harm's way and trust to luck," I responded. "Perhaps we can hold them in the cave till the men have gone, and then set them adrift in a boat for Cuba."

"Well, yes, p'raps. Come on, then. But keep quiet, for I ain't sure this may n't be some sort of a trap sot a pu'pose to catch us."

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We stole out stealthily to where the Spaniards were stretched on the sand, and, ascertaining that there was no one else in sight, quickly roused them from the stupor that their fatigue and fright had plunged them into. The old Don bristled up like a tiger-cat, as I touched him on the shoulder, and the serving woman let out a scream, which Eli quickly muffled with his hand over her mouth; but the maiden said not a word. She arose to an erect position, drew a mantilla about her head and shoulders, and, something seeming to assure her that we were friends, placed a hand in mine and allowed me to lead her away.

Fortunate was it for us that the old Don understood some few words of English, else we might have had a fight on our hands right there, unarmed as he was. But he knew what the word "friend" meant, as whispered in his ear, and went without a struggle; the more readily as we heard sounds as of a body of men approaching, confused shoutings and the clash of arms.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPANISH DON AND HIS DAUGHTER

YOU may well believe, reader, that we lost no time in leading the way to the pit's mouth, and as quickly as possible urging our Spanish friends thereinto; but it was one thing to show them the way and quite another to get them to travel it. For, as we considered it yet dangerous to light a candle or a torch, the gleam whereof might betray us to anyone outside the hut, we had to grope in the dark. And it was no easy matter to indicate to the three foreigners, mostly by signs, as we had to, that they must duck beneath the cot, then drop into the pit, one at a time, and thence make their way through the subterranean passage to the cave above in the cliffs.

Methinks there may have been positions in my life almost as trying as this, but not quite. The Don and his daughter were tractable enough, but not so the maidservant, who was prone to shriek out every moment, really believing, I think, that we were going to bury her alive. I knew no more than a dozen or so of Spanish words, and those few would not come at my bidding; while Eli's Spanish was of a kind not readily understood. So there we were, huddled within the hut, all of us, Eli striving with all his might to quiet the servant, I to reassure the Don and the maiden, and John wringing his hands in sheer despair.

Every moment was a precious one, of a surety, for outside there was a noise as of a pursuing party taking up the trail.

At last I let drop the words "subterreanean" and "cave," at which the Don, most fortunately, caught with eagerness, turning to me and saying, "Subterraneo y cueva?" which I at once guessed were Spanish words for an under-

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ground passage and a cave, and said "yes"—*si*—with equal readiness, grasping at a straw, as it were. Then he turned to his companions, and said something to them in his own tongue in which occurred these words, and I knew he was explaining to them just what we wanted them to do.

Then there was no more delay, for, one after another we dropped into the pit, I leading, the maiden following right after, and then the Don, with the maidservant at his heels. As soon as I had reached the passage leading out from the cave I lighted my torch—being then safely out of sight from any one in or near the hut—and our captives followed the light like moths pursuing a candle flame. There was no more hesitation, and in a few minutes we were all in the great chamber. I first hung a blanket over the vine-draped opening, lest the flicker of a light through it might betray our whereabouts, then motioned to the maiden to seat herself on one of the skin-covered couches, and the Don and

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servant to do the same. They obeyed with alacrity, and while they reclined at ease Eli and I mixed some wine and water for their refreshment.

Needs not that I should say that they were grateful, when finally assured of safety and the integrity of our intention. The Don rose and embraced me, in true Spanish fashion, calling me "*hijo*" and "*amigo*," which I later learned were "son" and "friend;" while the maiden swept me over with a glance so full of gratitude that I felt my face burn with blushes, and was very glad the darkness hid it from the sight of others. The Don also embraced Eli and patted him on the back, pouring forth a torrent—so it seemed to us—of words that it seemed he would never check. We tried to make them understand that they were welcome to all they found in the cave, and also they must not venture out until we gave the word.

The Don shook his head as if to say he understood, and his daughter also nodded; but

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the serving maid maintained a sullen silence. She had not yet made up her mind that we were incarcerating them with friendly intent, it appeared, and she could n't forgive Eli for so rudely checking her cries when he clapped his hand over her mouth. But that did not matter, so long as the master and mistress comprehended. We relied on them to lie low and keep out of sight. They had everything they could need for weeks and months in the matter of eatables and drinkables; their only deprivation would be of sunshine and outdoor air. The gloom of the cave might prove oppressive after a while; but that was not our fault. We had done the best we could under the circumstances, as Eli said, and if they preferred to take their chances at being shot or hanged, that they were still privileged to do.

So we left them fairly well content, and went back to face the music—in other words, the hubbub outside—which, by the time we had reached the hut, had swelled almost to a hurri-

cane—what the Indians call an “ouragan.” We found John still on guard, but in somewhat of trepidation, for not a few of the brethren had poked their heads in at the door to ask him if he had seen aught of the Spaniards. As he in very truth could say that he had not—the darkness having prevented—they had all departed none the wiser for their visits, he told us.

“Did any of ’em have torches or lanthorns?” asked Eli.

“A few,” replied John; “but they did n’t appear to be examining the sand for footprints, if that ’s why you ask.”

“That is just why,” rejoined Eli, “and the very fust thing for us to do now is to wipe out them telltale footprints. I only hope it ain’t too late, that ’s all. There ’s three sets of footprints, the Don’s, the maiden’s and the serving woman’s, and for the life of me I don’t see how we ’re going to oblit’rate ’em all before the gang gets on the trail.”

“Well,” said John (and I thought he spoke

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up pretty frowardly for one of his retiring disposition), "suppose you go out and see if they show up very much, Mr. Eli. I think I am safe in offering you a Portuguese Jo for every woman's footprint you 'll find in the sand within bowshot of our hut."

"What? What d' you mean, youngster? There ain't been any storm of rain or anything to wash 'em away. And I know one of them females made a pooty deep print, by the way she dug her heels into the sand as I tried to drag her along. Jewhizzer, but she 's a Tartar, that same gal. But I 'll go out, just the same, and see what I can see."

Eli soon came back with the information that, so far as he could see by the light of the moon, there was n't a trace of any woman's shoe-print anywhere to be found. "But they 's a lot of blamed big boot-prints that looks if they might have been made by a number ten or 'leven boot, and the man that wore 'em drunk at that, near 's

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I can find out, for he seems to have fell down and wallered in the sand every dozen yards or so. Whoever he was, he's done us a mighty big service, lemme tell you, boys; for, blame me, if he hain't destroyed the telltale track clean as a whistle."

"Hush, Eli, not so loud," replied John, at the same time chuckling to himself in a way that it did me good to hear, he had been so solemn and silent ever since he was wounded.

"But I was the one who wiped out the tracks, and here is what I did it with," he said, reaching under the bed and pulling out a pair of old boots that had belonged to one of the sailors who went to the sharks that gruesome day after the fight in the harbor.

"I just jumped into them, after you had all gone underground, and, as you say, 'wallered about' till I was satisfied there would be no trace of the trail. I did n't want to sit here idle while you and Humphrey were doing everything, did I?"

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“Well, I vum to gracious, Jack; I did n’t think you had so much gumption. I do believe there ’s the making of a man in you, after all. Could n’t a done it better myself; no, nor even half so well, Jackie, boy. There ain’t a sign now by which them Spaniards can be tracked to this here hut, and if we don’t know nothing, but just set still and look wise when the old man comes along to catechize us, why, there won’t be nobody the wiser, I figger it out. Leastwise, unless that she cat, the serving woman, gives it all away.”

“But, Hump, what we going to do with ’em now we ’ve got ’em—as was said before? The way we hustled them poor critters into the cave, without saying ’s much as ‘by your leave,’ was a caution to snakes. The whole thing reminds me of a yarn my father used to tell about an exper’ence of his’n down to Louisburg. He and another soldier went out hunting, and what ’d they come up ag’inst but a big bull moose. My father up and let drive as he come a-chargin’

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straight at him, and hit him square in the centre of his forid, atwixt the eyes, but did 'nt do nothing but stun'd him a bit, so 't he stumbled to his knees and was kinder dazed, just long 'nough for father to grab him by the antlers. Well, no sooner 'd father got a good grip than the moose begun to come to, and the way he did rare and tear, father said, was a caution to snakes and little grasshoppers. But father held on, knowing that his life depended on 't, and was thrown this way and that and shaken up and down through the undergrowth, till he had n't scarcely a whole stitch of clothes on his back, let alone his legs and arms. As for his gun, he had n't no sort of an idee where that was, and did n't care, s' long 's he had n't no chance to load it up and fire another bullet into the critter.

“Well, things went on this way for quite a while, until, just as that air moose had about worn father out, his partner up and comes along and yells for him to hold on—which was about as foolish a piece of advice as he could have given

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him, seeing 's he could n't do nothing else without running the resk of being gored to death. The man tried to slip up close to the moose on t' other side from where father was last, but he could n't seem to fix it nohow ; for father he was being slung this side and that, so 't there wa'n't no locating him at all. But at last he managed to hamstring the brute with his hunting-knife, and then cut his capers short with a bullet in his heart.

“ Well, what I was coming at was the sim'larity betwixt father's case and ours: for when I used to ask father what he was thinking of mostly when he was a-being slung about so tormentedly, he used to say that he was a-wishing most for somebody to help him let go that moose !

“ See the p'int, hey? Here we 've got our fine Spaniards safe in our castle, so to speak, and so far 's we know there ain't any reason why we can't keep 'em there ; but how, and when, in the name of all tarnation, are we going to let go of 'em, hey? ”

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"I don't know, Eli, I 'm sure. But let 's leave that trouble till we have to meet it. God showed us a way to get them there without bloodshed, and that 's more than we expected a few hours ago, was n't it?"

"It was that, Hump, my boy. We done our dooty and God helped us. There aint no getting away from that, sure 's we 're alive. And I do believe that if we continue to do our dooty—as I 'm sure we shall—He will help us some more. Now, what do you say?"

"You know our sentiments, Eli—Jack's and mine. If it was n't for some sort of a faith like that—but there, you 'll say I 'm preaching."

"Not a bit, old feller. Heave ahead. That ain't preaching—it 's only clenching an argyment. Still, it ain't no use to waste breath trying to prove what 's as plain 's the nose on your face. It *was* providential, and let it go at that."

"Hist, here comes somebody with a light. It 's

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old Jaques, sure 's I 'm a sinner. ·Hola, Jaques, old boy, what's up?"

"Ah, *mon ami*, zat yo, eh? Vat ees oop, you say, eh? Vell, all is oop, all is ovair; ze *Espagnoles*, zey haiv aiscapè. *Sacré tombeau!*"

"What, the Spaniards have escaped? When? Where are they?"

"*Sacre fou!* how ees eet I shall know, ze where and ze when? Eet is *suffisamment* zat zey air gone; vamoose, ze bag and ze baggage. *Non*, not all, ze—vat you call?—ze sailor men, zey all join ze *fraternité*."

"Oh, ah, so the sailors have joined the brotherhood, hey? That is good. You hear that, Hump?" [In an aside to me] "That will set your mind easy."

"So nobody is to be shot—eh, Jaques?"

"*Non*—that is, nobody but me; only Jaques he is to be shot!"

"Nonsense, man, you 're joking. Why should you be shot, hey?"

"Oh, nozing; only it was I zat guard ze

Espagnoles, and—and—zey aíscape, zat is all. *N’importe*—it don’t matter nozing. *Je suis content*. M’sieu Eli, have you ze *tabac pour la pipe*? I vill to smoke.”

“Yes, yes, here ’s tobacco—all you want. But look here. They won’t shoot you, Jaques; will they now, honest Injun?”

“Sure. Why not? Ze *Capitaine* Mansvelt he say so; Morgan he say so.”

“But why did you leave your post, Jaques? You might have known.”

“*Oui, oui, certainement*. I know; but I have—what you call?—ze *soif* ze great thirst, and I go to get ze *vin*, or ze *rum*—only one leetle *demi heure*, and when I return zey have depart. *Eh bien*, give me ze light. *En peu de feu, si’l vous plait*, M’sieu Eli.”

“This is awful,” I said to Eli, in a whisper. “What can we do?”

“Do? Why I shall see Mansvelt at once. I vum, but I ’m glad it wa’n’t *my* wine did the business. Poor old Jaques! He sha’n’t be shot, though, not if I have to stand in his place.”

CHAPTER XIV

NOW FORTH FOR PREY AND SPOILS

ELI was about to start right off on his mission when Jaques stopped him. "Pardon, M'sieu Eli; but you haf not mek me acquaint wiz yo' friends. Befo' yo' go, eef yo' inseest on seeing ze Capitaine about me—why, it would be a plaisir to haf ze convair-sazione wiz zese zhentilmens."

So Eli introduced old Jaques—who until this time had been outside the hut at the doorpost—and then left him with us while he went over to lay the case before Mansvelt. We all hoped it would not be necessary to see Morgan, for he hated old Jaques, for some reason, while Mansvelt had a liking for him. But we knew he would not allow his liking to turn him from per-

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ferming what he considered necessary for the preservation of discipline, and so it seemed like a rather forlorn hope that Eli started on.

After Eli's departure old Jaques tried to start a conversation with us, still preserving an air of indifference as to his fate; but it languished from lack of response on our part. On almost any other occasion we would have been eager to learn more of so famous a member of the fraternity—one who had been here on the island so many years, who had accompanied Lolonois on his murderous voyages, and could tell us the history of the buccaneers from earliest times; but had suddenly lost interest in his life through apprehension as to his probable fate—his death, perhaps, being near at hand.

Finding his attempts at conversation hopeless, old Jaques gave them up, with a shrug of his shoulders, and muttered "*eh bien*," and devoted his attention to his pipe, which was filled with the fragrant herb known to the Indians as tobacco, and which is said to have been first

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introduced into my native country, England, by Sir Walter Raleigh ; though as to this I have well grounded doubts. At all events, the fragrant weed against which good King James of sacred memory issued his famous "counterblast," and notwithstanding which was so useful in the famous great plague of 1665, at London, as an herb of exceeding great virtue ; this weed, I say, was in great request among the buccaneers. The Indians of Haiti had taught them how to cure it and also how to smoke it. Not only did they make the dry leaves into rolls, which are lighted and smoked by being thrust into the mouth, but they used what they called a "cachimamba," or Y-shaped pipe, the branches of which they insert into the nostrils wherewithal to inhale the smoke and aroma of the tobacco.

But I did not intend a dissertation on this fragrant though pernicious weed, the which had not then come into extensive use, even among the residents of its native home, the West Indies. I myself never could endure its smoke ; though

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this is not to argue that others might not derive refreshment and even consolation from it, as they professed to do.

Now, it seemed that Eli could not have been absent much longer than it hath taken to tell of it than he came stumping back all a feather-white with eagerness to impart the news he brought. From this we augured, ere he divulged its import, that it was of necessity good news, else he would not have been in such haste to return.

"Yes," he said, in answer to our questions, "it is both good news, and bad. That old rascal, Jaques, will save the number of his mess till another time, and will be given another opportunity to prove his devotion to the fraternity. His life is spared, but he must promise not to do it again—that is, not let any prisoners go who are of value to the brotherhood."

At this announcement old Jaques displayed the only sign of interest at all. "*Sacré tombeau,*" he exclaimed, "as eef I would not do

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ze same sing (thing) again eef I haf ze *soif*. Pooh! I accep' no condition. I would razer [rather] quench ze *soif* and suffair ze penaltie zan not quench ze *soif* and *suffair* nozing [nothing]."

"You old scoundrel," burst out Eli. "I reely believe you 'd ruther quench that con-founded thirst of yours—and which has got you into trouble all your life—than be guaranteed existence for a thousand years. Here I have been up and interceded with the capt'in for you, and prob'ly saved your worthless old life, and you a whining about your infernal thirst!"

"Vell, M'sieu Eli, vat you vill, eh? Ze *soif* eet is mine, and ze life eet ees mine, *aussi*, and eef I sink [think] ze more of ze one zan ze ozer, why, whose beesnis ees eet, eh, M'sieu Eli?"

As for leeving one tousand year—*tombeau de diable*—I not want eet—not eef it must to be in Tortuga."

"No, and I don't blame you, neither, though

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the island's good enough, as to that matter. It's the human hyenas, like you and Morgan—renegade Welshmen and frog-eaters—that make this nat'ral paradise a very hell. Now shut up! Don't say a word. You won't even thank me for putting in my oar to save your miserable carcass from being plugged by bullets, and I won't take any of your slack; don't care if you be older 'n I am!"

"Ah, M'sieu Eli, you have—what yo' call?—ze unruly tong'. Because I do not sank [thank] you, eet ees because my life not value so mooch. But eef I haf occasione to serve yo', zen yo' shall see."

"Well, well, we shall see, as you say. Now let me tell you something—all of you. There's a big move on foot, and to-morrow or next day we set out on another expedition. Yes, and I've orders to take you with me, Hump, as well as old Jaques. That is to warn you not to hang back, for go you must and go you shall, so Mansvelt says."



For Prey and Spoils.—4.

"'HERE, DOG'S SON,' HE SNARLED."

14—For Prey and Spoils.

See p. 208.

"And I?" asked John. "You won't go and leave me, will you?"

"That depends," answered Eli, aloud. But going over to where John sat he whispered: "Of course, you can't go, Jack. You have the Spaniards to look after. You're their jailor, you know."

"But why am I obliged to go?" I finally asked. "Can't I remain if I choose? There'll be killing, of course, and bloodshed, and plundering."

"Oh, yes, all that," replied Eli, as I thought, very callously. "But you've got to go, just the same, for Mansvelt says so, and there's the end of it. So prepare for the morrow, Hump; get your house in order, and, what's more, make up your mind to take the oath."

On the morrow I found it even as Eli had said—all was hurry and bustle for departure. The ships were always ready, it being the first duty of their captains to put them in order as soon as they arrived in port and had discharged

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their cargoes; so there was nothing to do but get out our personal effects and—as Eli had truly said—take the oath to serve well and faithfully the fiends in human shape that we called our leaders.

The twain, Morgan and Mansvelt, had set themselves in their huts' mouth, and as we made ready to depart we were compelled to deploy before them, each buccaneer repeating after each one in front of him the prescribed form of oath. For sake of peace, I made my lips move as though repeating the formula; but the eye of Morgan detected—or his evil nature suggested—that I was not saying over the words: "These our masters I will well and truly serve and obey them in all things they may command; and I know no other lord and master, nor will I ever serve another."

"Here, dog's son," he snarled as I passed, marching with my musket on shoulder, cutlass at side, pistols in belt, and very brave in a slashed doublet and tan seaboots with falling

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tops. Eli was my mate, and heard also the insult, in the nature of a command. And he whispered: "Don't mind the varmint. He means you; but you've no call to know it."

But Morgan was not to be put off, for he was in a surly mood. "Here, dog's son, Gilbert, come hither. An' keep on at your peril. What's that you're muttering? Not the sacred oath, I'll be shot! Stand by here and repeat it after me."

"Who is that you've rounded to?" asked Mansvelt, who just then came to the door, buckling on a belt. He had on his head a broad sombrero with a feather drooping from its brim, a buff jerkin, crimson hosen, and boots with pointed toes. Withal, he was a goodly figure to look at then, and I unconsciously looked my admiration as I saluted him, then stood rigid near the doorpost, with Eli at one side. "What have you stopped the lad for?" asked Mansvelt of Morgan, who was glaring at me with a vicious expression in his eyes.

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"My business, my lord," answered Morgan, sneeringly, "and not yours."

"Nothing on this island but is my business," rejoined Mansvelt, angrily, "and I thank you to keep your monkey fingers out of my pie. Go on, men, and lose no time in getting to the ship."

"Yes, go on," mocked Morgan, "but remember we have a reckoning after."

"If you touch the boy you have me to reckon with," quickly rejoined Mansvelt.

"So be it, then," said Morgan. "But I'll do it!"

And this was the beginning of the quarrel which, as some time past I remarked, I was instrumental (though unwittingly) in provoking. It came to head on the voyage, and cost a life.

Having arrived at the ship in which we were to sail, we were all drawn up on deck to hear read the articles of agreement by which all were mutually bound. In the first place, we were

supposed to own all property in common, not only on the island, but on and including the ships. This was a pleasing fiction encouraged by the leaders in order to give us an interest in the work. However, all buccaneers up to the time of Morgan had kept faith with their men; but he, later on, not alone deprived them of their just dues—if such an expression may be used of plunder taken by force and perchance by the shedding of blood—but also caused many to lose their lives. This, however, was in after times, and does not pertain to the period now under consideration.

To carry out, then, the semblance of fair play, we were assembled on deck and agreed to the following articles: First, we fixed upon a price the captain of the ship was to receive; then came the ship's carpenter, who, being a most indispensable man, was adjudged to receive—when we had obtained it from some one else—the sum of one hundred and fifty pieces of eight for the voyage. The ship's chirurgion was another

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man likely to be of great service in case of an engagement with an enemy, and he was granted, for himself and his medicines, two hundred and fifty pieces of eight.

The captain of each ship, by the way, was to receive six times the amount of the plunder that a common sailor should be entitled to ; the master's mate two portions ; and so on down from the highest unto the lowest, not forgetting the boys who served as powder-monkeys and attended to the cabins.

Then ensued a gruesome ceremony, to wit, the allotting to each man the compensation he was to receive for a prospective wound or for being maimed or suffering loss of limbs. For example, it was agreed that the loss of a right arm should be compensated for by six slaves or six hundred pieces of eight ; a left arm was to entitle one to five slaves or five hundred pieces of eight ; and the same for the loss of the right leg ; though for the left leg one was to receive only four slaves or four hundred pieces of eight.

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I myself could not see why there should be discrimination in the matter, neither could Eli, who said: "Seems to me I should feel the loss of my left leg just 's much as my right one; though as to any difference betwixt the right arm and the left, why—of course there is. Howsomever, I guess there ain't much chance of losing either this trip, Hump, so don't worry. But you may be sure that, if you do meet with any of the losses specified, the money will be paid. The fust thing the brethren do after getting back to port is to reckon up the damages for wounded ones and 'deaders,' and then pay up."

For the loss of an eye—as though one could be in any manner on earth compensated for that—one slave only was to be awarded and one hundred pieces of eight, and for any one finger of the hand the same, so that were one to lose a hand he would get five hundred pieces of eight therefor—that is, for the right hand, and for the loss of a foot, or the toes of a foot, the same.

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Having in this barbarous manner been warned of what they might expect as their portion, in case of being maimed or wounded, and having, with much boisterousness, settled the matter to their satisfaction, the brethren hoisted sails, set the black flag at the peak, and thus fared forth for further prey and spoils.

CHAPTER XV

THE CAPTURE OF PORTO BELLO

IT is with scant ceremony, I fear me, that I have dismissed my mate, John, and his precious charge, the dwellers in the cave, from this narrative. It was not my intention, truly, to ignore them; but in the hurry of departure and the exceeding crowding together of events I have e'en o'erlooked them. Let me now make some amends ere I betake me hence from Tortuga and embark upon the career of crime into which I was forced.

But spare me the recital of our parting words, especially the harrowing details of our farewells. Suffice it that John and I had grown to love each other truly and well, and to be separated was like driving a knife into the flesh. I mis-

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doubted that we should ever be rejoined; but yet I tried to keep a brave heart and a smiling face for his sake. Poor boy, he had no mother, sister or brother to cheer him; I was all in all to him, as he full oft told me.

But well it was that he had a responsibility thrust upon him, in shape of the Spaniards in the cave, else he must have brooded sore o'er his sorrows. It was more to divert his mind from our departure than aught else that I strove to impress upon him the serious nature of his charge: that he was to visit the Spaniards at least once a day, to glean for their divertisement all the gossip of the camp, and to take them such fruits and refreshments as it were possible for him to obtain.

Snatching an hour before our departure, also, Eli and I accompanied John in a visit to the cave, in order to take farewell of our captives and tell them to be of good cheer. We found them very much depressed, especially the serving maid, who was for the scratching out of Eli

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Herrick's eyes, apparently, she looking upon him as the cause of all her woes. But the Don was more gracious and received us with the customary embrace and salute.

His daughter, also, was graciousness itself, and flashed upon us such glances from her dark orbs that I felt ashamed. Not so Eli, I am constrained to relate; for her glances were to me like the sunshine on an apple's cheek, bringing out the color; they merely reflected themselves in the eyes of bold Eli Herrick, who seemed, in sooth, to delight in their radiance. She gave to each of us a slender hand and chatted gaily the while, darting at both Eli and me those penetrating glances, which e'en pierced me through and through, me seemed. For I had rarely before met a fair lady of near my own age—methinks she was about seventeen—so close as to engage her in conversation. Our speech, of course, was but halting, since of each other's language we knew small measure; but the demoiselle spake as much with her eyes as with

her ruby lips, methinks, and it was not difficult to understand her.

Ah, but I did admire the gallant Eli, so bold and yet so deferential was he withal. No longer was he the scantily educated buccaneer, lame of speech and uncouth of manner. Verily, he seemed to swell with the occasion, and had he but a broidered jerkin, a jewel-hilted sword and a plumed cap withal, I misdoubt me he had not been taken for a prince, despite his wooden leg and many scars. The obscurity of the cavern hid his numerous defects, and by the same token it may have enhanced the beauty of the maiden; but, at all events, we were seemingly well pleased with each other, and the hour passed all too quickly, I ween.

I showed the maiden and her father how the rift in the rock that overlooked the sea commanded a view of our fleet, which was then riding at anchor in the harbor, with sails loosened ready to depart. They both sighed at sight of the sea, and the Don sniffed eagerly at

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the whiff of sea air that came through the window.

“Oh, that it were possible for me to go with you!” he said, and cursed his fate that he should be immured there like a rat in a hole while things were going on outside. Learning from Eli that our probable destination was the Spanish main, and, at a venture, the city of Porto Bello, he gnashed his teeth and tore his hair in very impotence and rage, explaining that he had property there, and not alone property, but another daughter, who was at school at the convent in Porto Bello. And, explaining all this to his daughter, she fell to weeping, so that it were a task quite beyond Eli and me to pacify her, withal. But, as the violence of their grief began to abate, they recognizing probably the futility of tears and groans, like the very sensible people that they were, I ventured to remark that peradventure our destination should be Porto Bello, we both would do all we could—yea, risk our very lives, to do them

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a service. At this the Don took heart, and the maiden darted at me—rather I should say through me—such a piercing glance of gratitude that I felt my heart swell near to bursting, and that moment would have been glad to have rushed upon an army of invaders for her sake.

“But how shall we know your daughter, señor, peradventure we should find her where we go?” I asked.

“*Amigo* (friend),” he answered; “she is the veritable image of this daughter here, her only sister, and though two years her junior she is full as large and as mature as she. Her name is Anita, and our patronymic is Del Mar, for we are of a noble family of Spain’s sea-fighters, which of yore won many a battle for the king. Thereby, in truth, I came possessed of property in Porto Bello, which was gained at the sword’s point by an ancestor of mine.”

When he had ceased speaking his daughter approached, and, taking a ring of gold set with gems from one of her fingers, pressed it upon me,

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saying: "Take this, noble youth, so that perchance you meet my dear sister she shall know you have seen me. If you do not meet her, then keep it as a token of our confidence in you."

Now, I was not given to soft speech with maidens, never having, as I have said, met them in close converse; but I took the ring most reverently, and, pressing it to my lips, I vowed to her that I would hold it as a trust until I should have found her sister and given it to her. And, I added, that if she were in peril I and my comrade would fight for her so long as we had breath within our bodies.

"And that we will, señorita," added Eli, "fight for her, and glad to do it, too. And if we do find her, rest assured that she will come along with us, if we have to move heaven and earth to bring it about."

And it were no vapping on Eli's part, neither on mine, as the sequel will show thee, reader, if thou wilt keep company with us further. Of a verity, we both felt ready to go through fire and

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water for this maiden and her father ; but I misdoubt me if we should have been so inspired had the Don been alone and told his tale.

However, let us not question our motive. Feeling that it would not be safe to wear the ring on my finger, I drew forth my mother's miniature, from its hiding-place beneath my doublet, with the view of attaching it to the golden chain by which the locket was suspended. At sight of the miniature the maiden's curiosity was excited, and forsooth I gave her a glance at the fair face of my mother, for proud was I and gratified to have one of her sex see and admire her.

The maiden gave one glance, and then exclaimed in admiration : "Ah, *que hermosa!* (how beautiful). *Es su madre?* (is it your mother?")

I nodded, but I could not speak, for the feelings that welled up in me, and the maiden took it in both hands, as though it were a sacred relic, and pressed it to her cheek, then to her lips.

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“*Madre, o mi madre!* (mother, oh, my mother),” she wailed, then fell to weeping; while the Don, who had also seen the portrait, turned his back, and for a space it seemed that he, too, was shedding tears.

But he soon controlled himself and said: “Pardon my child, for she is motherless; the sweet face of that lady, your mother, reminded her of our loved one, for there is great resemblance.”

I was then reminded me of one I had for the moment forgotten, to wit, John, my chum, who had remained silently standing by all through our conversation. Now, it was time that he should be made acquainted with the Spaniards, and I was glad to create a diversion by saying that he was to have special charge of them while we were away, and that his commands must be implicitly obeyed. Both the Don and the maiden smiled upon him, the latter through her tears, and both promised, while at the same time

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they embraced him, that they would accept him as their jailor.

Now, it must not be supposed that all I have narrated transpired as glibly as I tell it, for of necessity our speech was halting, lacking words for mutual understanding. But the Spaniards well understood that their safety lay in secrecy, and that we should watch for an opportunity for their release, and avail ourselves of it as soon as it should be safe to make the attempt. But in any case nothing could transpire until our return, as to which we knew nothing, neither the date nor the manner of it.

“God be with you,” said the Don, as he finally embraced us, and the maiden murmured: “May God save you, gentlemen, and bring you safely back again;” but the serving woman only glowered at us from a remote corner of the cavern to which she had retired in a rage.

“By gum,” was Eli’s first exclamation after we had emerged from the pit and reassembled in the hut: “I b’lieve that ’s the pootiest gal

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I ever set eyes on; blamed if she ain't a picter!"

"Do you mean the serving woman?" asked John, demurely, being prone to poke fun, I ween, knowing full well of whom Eli spake.

"No, you scapegrace, I mean the señorita, Miss Maria Del Mar, the English of which is Mary of the Sea, and a mighty fine name it is, too. Blame me if I would n't go through fire and brimstone for her, old as I am, and so would Hump, too, or I misween me much; eh, friend Humphrey?"

"That I would," I replied; "or, for that matter, for any lady whatever who was thrown on my protection as she is on ours. It is our duty, Eli, as you know, as well as our pleasure, to defend her; and, as for her sister, we must find her, or never return without having used our every effort to do so."

And thus it was we went aboard the galleon with a determination that inspired us to endure much, to brave everything, for the sake of those

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placed in dependence upon us. I misdoubt me if any fair lady of olden time ever had more loyal liege knights errant than had Señorita Del Mar in Eli Herrick and myself. I may say this now, since subsequent events proved our mettle ; and again, said events are a long time in the past, as I now write.

But no longer will I delay describing the voyage we took, and which resulted in such consequences, disastrous to some, hopeful to others, but which served only to weld more firmly the chains that bound me to the pirates' cause. We sailed forth from the harbor, such a fleet that its like had never been gathered before in these waters. There were fifteen sail, big and little, from the huge three-decker carracks and galleons captured at odd times from the Spaniards to small sloops and brigs, West Indian built and rigged, picked up here and there among the islands. The nominal captain, or rather admiral, of this pirate fleet was Mansvelt, and Henry Morgan was his vice-admiral. Before the voy-

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age ended this man Morgan was admiral, both in name and in fact, and Mansvelt was no more; but that will be told shortly, as it came about.

Fifteen vessels and five hundred men made a force that might well cause the hearts of our enemies to quake, and doubtless they would have had they known we were at sea on pillage bent. It was at first Mansvelt's intention to sail forth for the windward channel between Cuba and Haiti, there to strive to intercept the king of Spain's treasure-fleet, which at this season was in convoy from the Isthmus of Panama to the home country with silver from the Peruvian mines. But he was doubtful if it were yet due, and meanwhile resolved to sail southward for the Gulf of Darien, there to attack, and if possible capture, the Spanish city of Porto Bello, or Puerto Bello, which, of ancient foundation and long engaged in traffick with the salvages of the gold country adjacent to Darien, was one of the wealthiest cities of the Spanish main. But it was strongly fortified, enclosed within high stone walls

and with a castle on its harbor that had never yet been taken by assault or reduced by cannonading. But, inasmuch as there had never set sail such another expedition for attack as this of ours, Mansvelt boasted vaingloriously that he would set the example and be the first pirate to reduce a walled city belonging to the king of Spain. Hence, once in the open sea, we steered southwardly for that doomed city, Porto Bello, and in due course arrived within sight of its frowning ramparts.

CHAPTER XVI

STORMING THE CASTLE AND CONVENT

THE first intimation the Spaniards of Porto Bello had of our coming was the scurrying back to harbor of divers fishing craft which were engaged off shore, and which, despite the endeavors of our admiral to intercept them, warned the governor of the city, so that he closed the city gates and shut himself up in his castle before we arrived under the walls. All endeavors to negotiate with him were fruitless, for well he knew the desperate men he had then to contend with, and opened a cannon fire upon us at once we were within range. But the Spaniards are and always were notoriously poor marksmen, and our admiral had for them such contempt that he paid no attention to their

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fire, but ordered out the small boats at once, and all the available men at arms rowed to the shore.

By a strange chance, one of the Spanish cannon balls did strike a galleon of the fleet 'twixt wind and water, and, stranger still, caused it to sink; but that mishap by no means dismayed us, nor greatly delayed the landing of our men. We had a few less, that was all, to assist at the reduction of the castle, and, as doubtless there would be still fewer after the battle was over, we should not need so many vessels to carry us back to Tortuga, withal.

By rowing up a narrow channel and around an angle of the sea-walls, we found a landing-place without the range of Spanish cannon, and there we formed in columns and marched forward to the assault. We had brought scaling ladders with us, which were carried in the van and quickly planted against the walls. They reached scarcely to the parapets, and even those that did were quickly thrown back upon our

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heads, together with pots of boiling pitch and caldrons of hot water, which the governor of the castle had prepared as soon as warned of our approach. Then ensued a pandemonium of oaths and cries from the wounded and the scalded pirates, a fusilade from muskets and arquebuses, and the throwing of hand-grenades; but all to no purpose.

By this our ships had brought their cannon into fire, and it was not long before a breach was made in the wall that surrounded the city, though the castle seemed impregnable. Quick to avail himself of this advantage, our leader ordered the breach to be stormed at once, and soon it was swarming with a motley throng of pirates, in the foremost front being Eli and myself. I had resolved, inasmuch as I should be regarded with suspicion peradventure I hung back and refused to fight, to throw myself into the very van of all, and by loud cries and flourishing of my cutlass to create the impression that I was fighting desperately. This was by Eli's advice, who saw

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how sore my conscience was regarding the company I was in.

So then, see us both storming the breach at the head of half a thousand men, more or less, shouting fit to split our lungs and piercing the air with sundry and divers stabs until such as saw us could not but admire us for our valor—as we had intended. What I should do if perchance I met a Spaniard I dreaded much to think; for it would have gone against the grain to have lopped his head off merely because he was engaged in defending his home. But fortunately for me no Spaniard gave me a chance to engage him at close quarters, for all who saw us ran as if, forsooth, the evil one himself were at his heels.

And who could blame them for acting the coward, with a host of fiends in view, come without warning to ravage their homes and deprive them of their lives?

I have never run from mortal man as yet, but, methinks, I would have at least waited till

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I got my back against a wall before making stand against such a horde of ruffians as ours.

We gained the city streets, but only to find them silent and deserted of all human beings. The massive stone houses on either side the chief streets were closed and apparently abandoned, for all the people who could do so had fled to the castle, where the governor had shut himself up and in fancied security bade us defiance, in sooth. The enraged pirates sacked the houses, recovering much treasures in silver and gold, and even spared not the church, robbing the altar of its massive golden ornaments, and then turned themselves to yet more reprehensible deeds.

At the seaward end of the city was the castle; at the landward end the great buildings of a convent, towards which, after our bands of cut-throats had slaked their thirst in Spanish wines, the which also inflamed their sinful lusts, they turned with loud shouts and brandishing of arms. Mansvelt—to his credit let it be recorded—refused to lead his men against the convent,

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filled, as he knew it to be, with women and children ; but Morgan overruled him in this, and himself stepped forward and harangued the men to do this divelish deed.

I heard with horror the order to march forward and carry the walls of the convent, and I would have held back had not the eye of Morgan been upon me. And again Eli whispered to me : " Remember what the Don said : His daughter is here, perchance, and if we are foremost, who knows but that we can save her ! "

Thus on we went, pellmell, cutlasses in air and again in the van of that howling, scoundrelly horde. We made short work of the convent barricades, and eftsoon were pouring through the corridors and into the patios, or inner courts, of the immense structure, like wolves in a sheep cote seeking for lambs. And we found them, too, all huddled together in the chapel, more than fifty women and girls listening to the prayers that were being offered by their instructors in religion. They had evidently

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been told to prepare for the worst, and in the main were calm with the desperation born of despair; yet some few could not but shriek at the appearance of the ruffianly horde, shaggy and unkempt, some brandishing blood-stained weapons, others their faces smeared with blood and all leering like hyenas at their prospective prey.

The voice of prayer was drowned in the shouts and cursings of the pirates, who for a moment held aloof, some even of these depraved monsters feeling compunction at advancing upon this assemblage of defenceless females. At this juncture a nun with saintly face stepped forward, holding in her hands a casket containing gold and silver trinkets, jewels, pearls, gems—the despoiling of those maidens there assembled, which she offered our leader, telling him they represented their entire possessions and entreating him to take them and depart.

But no, Morgan the monster had other plans in view. He indeed took the offering, passing

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it to his lieutenant; but he then said, in his loud and uncouth voice: "Form yourselves into ranks and pass out into the street. Men, fall back and allow these ladies to pass. Go, now, and stand not here another moment. Go hence!"

The trembling females did as he directed, and marched quietly out through the corridors, twelve stately women leading more than forty maidens quivering with fright and weeping silently. We parted ranks, and they passed out into the street, where they were ordered to march without halting directly for the drawbridge at the castle gate. Then we saw the full and horrible purport, of Morgan's intention: It was to compel the female captives to lead the way with scaling ladders, which they were ordered to place against the walls!

Behind this barricade of virtue and innocence the pirates were to advance and assault the castle, unless indeed the governor should shrink from killing his own friends some of them per-

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chance his own relatives, and consent to parley. Never, perhaps, was any other man offered such a terrible alternative, and it must have torn the governors heartstrings sorely to decide: whether to fire upon those innocents, mingled as they were with the thronging pirates, or consent to surrender the castle and all it contained to the treacherous villains in whose word he could by no means place dependence. That alternative was offered him, and not hours, but minutes, given him to decide. The nun with saintly face called in clear bell-like voice to the governor not to betray his trust, for if her life and the lives of her companions could save him and all the castle contained, she and they were ready for the sacrifice. At which, with a curse on his lips, that devil Morgan leaped upon and ran her through with his sword. She fell bleeding amid the throng of white-faced, shrieking girls and scowling men, and would have been trampled on had not Eli and myself, as with one impulse, leaped forward and taken her in our arms.

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“Drop her! Drop that drab, and go back to the ranks!” shouted Morgan, fairly foaming at the mouth. “Men, sieze those scoundrels and off with their heads!”

I whispered to Eli, “Bear her back gently, while I hold them back. Perchance I fall, it cannot be worse.” He nodded, and I released my hold of the woman, and, without giving my enemies time to oppose themselves against me, sprang like a tiger full at Morgan’s throat. The impact of my spring bore him to the earth, and betime his myrmidons had reached me he was black in the face from the grip I gave him on the throat, for my fingers clenched themselves like steel upon his sinewy neck, and but another moment would have been his last! I knew my time was short, and strove not only to choke him but to break his neck if possible; and I think I should have succeeded had we not been torn apart so rudely. But for all the rescue he was unconscious, and for most of that day was



For Prey and Spoils.—5.

“THE MAN OF BLOOD SHALL DIE.”

See p. 242.

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surely out of the fight, despite the attempts of our chirurgeon to bring him round again.

His men fell upon me, many at a time, and it would have gone ill with me had it not been for Mansvelt, who commanded them not only to unloose me but to return my cutlass, which had dropped to the ground in the affray.

“Go, now,” he said, and he pressed my hand in a way that had in it approval for my act. “Go, now, and assist thy chum in recovering the wounded nun. They have taken the direction of the convent.”

I hesitated, for my blood was boiling, and I greatly desired to complete the work I had so well begun. But Mansvelt laughed, as if fully comprehending my desire, and said: “Not now; thou hast done enough for a beginning. Doubtless he will let thee have it out with him another day!”

My reason returning in a measure then, I did as he had commanded, and, wending my way between the disordered ranks, sought the convent,

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where in sooth I found, not only Eli and the captive nun, but another with them who, despite my disordered fancy, at the time, suggested to me some familiar face. In short, the girl attendant upon the nun, I felt sure at first glance, was none other than the younger daughter of the Don! She had the same black eyes and hair, round cheeks, ruby-red lips, with such delicious curves in them, as had her sister, and withal a shapely, lithesome figure. She was rather above the common height of girls of her age—which the Don had intimated was about fifteen—and had about her an air of maturity not derived from years.

All these details I noticed, as it were, unwittingly, and almost at a glance; for there was, sooth, no time for idle curiosity. I doubt if the girl then gave me a single thought, except to reason that here was but another pirate, one the more or less being all the same to her, since all were in league against her life. She merely glanced at me, then, being absorbed up in her

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charge, the saintly nun, who was reclining on a cot supported by the young girl with an arm under her head.

That the nun was wounded unto death I knew at first view of her, the pallor on her pure face was such ; but I said nothing. The blood still flowed from the wound in her side, staining her white robe and the cot upon which she lay ; her breath came in quick, short gasps, except for which there was no sign of life. Standing near the foot of the cot, in the little room scarcely more than a cell, with its bare, white walls, was my comrade, and with him old Jaques, but for whose assistance surely the nun could not have been borne out from that noisome throng to this quiet sanctuary. The veteran pressed my hand as I entered, and Eli linked an arm in mine, and we stood silent there, with bared heads, knowing in our souls that we were in the presence of death.

Whether it were better to go or stay we knew not, but, feeling our unfitness for such a place, were about to steal softly out when the dying

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woman opened her eyes, raised herself to a sitting posture, and, pointing with the extended finger of one hand at poor Jaques, said in a clear, distinct voice: "The man of blood shall die!" Then she gasped once or twice, fell back and died.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW A ROOF WAS BURNED OVER OUR HEADS

THE maiden cried out, once only, in a horrified voice, then she gazed at the nun's face as if stupefied. We crept in, we three, and stood stupidly at the cot's foot, neither knowing what to do nor for what purpose we were there, save that our hearts were full of sympathy for the girl, whom we were at loss how to pacify.

She knelt at the side of the departed one, and hid her face in her hands. We knew then that she had recovered from her first shock and might soon be amenable to reason. For, sooth, sacred as was such a scene and imperative as was her duty to the departed, we knew that it was now the living, not the dead, who demanded our

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endeavors. The strife of battle was now so great that it penetrated into this inner chamber, and as it grew louder and louder Jaques became exceedingly uneasy. "I must go," he whispered, "to see how the battle cometh on." And, troth, he was only too glad to get away from this chamber of death, for he could not endure the sight of that still, calm face, which, though it was transfigured to look like an angel's, yet wore an expression of reproach.

God's creature, so fair, so pure, and yet to fall victim of so foul a deed! What wonder that the dead woman's face reflected somewhat of the reproach in her last words! I heard old Jaques mutter, as he passed out and down the corridor: "The man of blood shall die! The man of blood shall die!" So it seemed that the words went home—at least to one of us.

Eli drew me outside the door and whispered: "Hump, do you know our situation's kinder critical? It is, faith. It won't do to be caught here like rats in a hole, for the pirates are raging

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outside like fiends. We must either go out and join 'em or barricade this building and hold it till we can have word with the Admiral, for they are all drunk with blood and rum and wine; we can't make no head ag'inst 'em. Now, it seems a wicked thing to do to tear that girl away from her only friend and at such a time; but it must be done, or in less 'n half an hour she and you and I will be dead, too." And he brought his wooden leg down with a bang on the floor.

"True, Eli, I know it; but what can I do?"

"Do? Why, turn to and rouse her. Tell her, what 's true, that the good nun is past all recovery, and if she values her life, and has any hope of ever seeing her father and sister (for it 's plain as daylight to you and me who she is, of course—she 's the Don's youngest daughter), the only thing she can do is to up and come along with us."

And this I did, while my comrade watched at the door. I went in and touched the girl on the shoulder. She moved not, though I spake and told her of the peril we were in, and that to

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save her life she must fly with us. I spake in English, though not knowing if she might understand me.

After a space she looked up, but with eyes that seemed not to see me, and slowly replied that she cared not, for she knew there was no hope, and adjured me to save myself, giving no further thought to her.

I responded that there might be hope—that she should not despair, for we were her friends, and would do our best to save her.

She looked at me with her hopeless eyes, and asked wearily: “For what? You will save me for what? Who can escape those fiends?”

Then, as if the thought of the pirates drove her to desperation, she sprang to her feet, and, drawing a small poniard from her dress, she exclaimed: “This will save me from them!” and was about to plunge it into her breast when I sprang forward and grasped her wrist.

“Hold, señorita, hold!” I cried. “Think of your sister, your father. I have news of them.

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I have seen them; they have sent me for you!"

She made an effort to wrench loose her wrist, her eyes flashing scorn, as though she misbelieved me and I lied. In sooth, she told me so: "Thou liest!" she cried. "What would my father have to do with foul pirates? He is a noble hidalgo of Spain, and—and—he would rather see me dead than beholden to a base bucanier!"

"Ah, señorita," I cried, almost in despair, "if you will drop that stiletto, promising me not to recover it, so that my hands may be free, I will prove it to you eftsoon. And if I do not, I swear it, I will allow you to do what you will."

She said not a word, but loosed her fingers and allowed the blade to drop to the floor. I placed a foot upon it, not knowing but that she might repent herself and recover it, then with trembling fingers I fumbled in my doublet for the ring that I had hung upon the chain around my neck. I brought it forth, loosened it from the chain and placed it in her palm.

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Her eyes dilated, losing in an instant their hard, strained look, then became suffused with tears.

“Sister! papa!” she murmured. “This is truly a token from them! Tell me, friend, how didst come by it?”

I told her, as briefly as possible; for now the roar of guns and shrieks of the victims gave terrible warning. Then she placed a hand in mine, and said she would do as I wished; but that she could not leave here alone, uncared for, unsepultered, the body of her teacher and friend. She was weeping now, for the unnatural calm that had possessed her had given away to weakness, and she trembled so that I called in my comrade to help me support her.

“No, no, I am brave, I am strong,” she cried. “I know our peril; we must fly; but I cannot, oh, I cannot, leave Sister Cecelia here, all, all alone! If you will carry her into the chapel, there I can prepare her for burial, for there is a tomb—her resting-place she used to call it—in

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which we can lay her, safe from the touch of vandal hands.

“Will you? Will you? Once there we can bar the great doors, and the sacristy adjoining is stored as for a siege, so that we may perchance hold out until the wretches have departed.”

“Yes, yes,” replied Eli. “But lose no time. Lead the way, and we will bear the dear lady to her last bourne. Ah, sorrow is it that one so good and fair should have come to this!”

A shudder shook the girl's slender frame as we took up our burden, but she had nerved herself for the supreme trial and did not fail. She went ahead of us until we came to the great door of the chapel, which was of massive build, thick and studded with nails. This we swung open and entered the dim interior, where the air was heavy with incense, and only the light from some candles illumined the room. The walls of the chapel were of stone and very thick, the windows merely slitted loopholes in the walls, while the roof was of thatch—a

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circumstance that came near being our undoing later on.

Eli and I bore our precious burden with great care into the chapel, and deposited it upon the marble slab of a great tomb, which was built into a niche near the high altar. This tomb opened at the side by the pressing of a secret spring, the working of which the maiden understood, and lost no time in availing herself of the knowledge. By pressing the spring the apparently solid marble could be slid to one side in a groove, and this done there was revealed within a satin-covered couch, as if prepared for a bride. It was, in sooth, the last resting-place of the holy woman, which she had prepared against the contingency of her death; but she never could have imagined that her death would have come about as it had.

Alas! Though we all must die, no one but feels sorrow when the inevitable end comes to a friend. Weeping afresh, the maiden smoothed the lady's hair back from the fair white brow, raining

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kisses upon her cheeks, and then (well aware that time was precious) signalled us to lay her within the tomb. I groaned aloud, as well as in spirit, to think that I should have such a task imposed upon me; and even old Eli, hardened man that he was, showed by his softened visage that he felt the sorrow of it all.

Such a sepulture should have been accompanied by prayer and holy offices; but these were not available, so in chastened haste we placed the departed within the tomb, and then, after the maiden had bestowed a loving touch here and there, slid the marble back into its place. "Dust unto dust." We had no sooner left our charge than the demands of the moment caused us to transform ourselves into men of action. Eli hastened back and closed the great door, locking and barring it against the ravening horde, which we could hear pouring through the corridors outside in search of us. There was a clatter of feet, mailed hands smote the door, then the butts of arquebuses battered against it.

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Confused shouts and oaths rose above the din of distant battle, and we were called upon to surrender. We paid no attention to the calls, but awaited in silence what might develop, knowing that our position was forlorn, if not indeed most desperate. The maiden clasped me by the hand, and pointed to the door of the sacristy, which opened into the chapel behind the high altar, and there I found, as she had said was there, great store of arms and provisions. There was enough of provisions in the way of food to carry us, I should think, through a siege of months, peradventure it should last so long; but I knew my former companions would not endure the delay, and if they could not force us out soon would e'en depart. The passage leading up to the door outside was narrow and crooked, affording no scope for the use of a battering ram, so, after vainly endeavoring to force an entrance, the men withdrew, and for a space we breathed more freely; though I could but think that the end had not yet come.

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“Oh, they ’ll come back in less ’n no time,” said Eli, in response to a question by our companion. “They ain’t goin’ to give us up so easy; consarn their picters! What I don’t like about the sitooation is the quietness of it. S’ long ’s they wus making an all-fired noise outside, why, we knowed jest where they was and what they was at; but now, blamed if I don’t b’lieve they ’re sneaking up with cannon to bumbard us, or some sich notion. One thing ’s true: they can’t git in at the winders, ’cause they ain’t any, hardly, onless we call them loopholes winders. The only thing I’m s’picious of is that ere thatch roof, made of palm leaves ’n poles, dry as tinder. It ’ll ketch fire like tow and turpentine. If it does, then we ’ve got to git out uv here quicker ’n greased lightnin’, I calkerlate. I wonder if there ain’t no dungeons or something of that sort we could hide in till the wust of it ’s over; that is, providin’ Morgan an’ the other divels press us a little too close?”

I repeated his question to the señorita, and

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she shook her head. "No," she replied. Then she immediately added, as though she had suddenly remembered something she had forgotten: "But, yes, there are dungeons, only not made for living people. They are dead men's dungeons, the catacombs of the holy men. Under the chapel is a vast subterraneo, but half filled with skeletons. Oh, I would not wish to go there, my friends."

"Well, ma'am, we won't go there unless we're driven to it," rejoined Eli. "But, jest as a sort of precaution, s'posen you show us the entrance, if you know whereabouts it is."

The maiden looked at me appealingly, then said, pointing to a marble slab set into the floor of the chapel near unto the tombs: "It is there." Then she turned aside her face and shuddered. But Eli, notwithstanding her qualms, stumped over to the slab, and, finding a ring of iron deep set in it, pried it up from its resting-place without more ado. He had hardly gotten it moved to one side before our at-

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tention was attracted to the roof, where a curl of smoke proclaimed that truly the pirates had done as he had feared they would do and set it on fire.

“Jest ’s I thought,” he muttered, squinting one eye up at the roof. “In less ’n ten minutes that air thatch will be blazing like all possessed, and when it falls we ’ve got to stand from under. Give me a lift here, Hump, so ’t I can get down into this ere pit and see ’f it ’ll do as a place of last resort. For us, I mean ; for it ’s that a’ready, if it ’s a dungeon tomb.”

I took hold with him and removed the slab clear from the hole, so that he could have free passage, and down he dropped, after assuring himself that the distance to a landing was not great. Seeing that he was going to explore the place, the señorita fetched a candle from the sacristy, which she lighted and gave him, thus showing that she was as quick-witted as she was sweet and fair to look upon. The flicker of the light was soon lost in the darkness, and while

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the girl and I waited at the opening the flames above us spread as if they were devouring tinder and tow, as Eli had most truly said they would. Not more than five minutes elapsed before Eli's reappearance, yet by that time the blaze above was terrific. Blazing bundles of palm leaves dropped to the floor at frequent intervals; the upper part of the chapel was hidden in smoke, through which fell flaming brands, like meteors out of the darkness of night.

CHAPTER XVIII

OUR REFUGE IN THE DUNGEONS OF THE DEAD

“**H**ELP me up, Hump, and be quick about it, too,” said Eli, as his head appeared below the opening. “This ere catty-comb ’s full of skilingtons; but I guess we ’ve got to take up our quarters here for a little bit, leastwise till the roof ’s burned up. The air ’s mighty close down here; but it ain’t so bad as smoke and flame, seems to me. Bad air ’s better ’n no air at all, ma’am,” he said to the señorita, after I had pulled him out of the hole. “Now get together all the food you can lay hands on in the space of three minntes, and bring all the jugs of water you can find, and take ’em into that there hole jest as soon ’s the Lord will let you. For there ain’t a minute to

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spare, lemme tell you, Hump. That roof 'll be down on our heads in a little less 'n no time."

In very sooth, it did not need the earnest warning of our friend to inform the maiden and myself that we were soon to be engulfed in a fiery furance, for the air was hot and the smoke stifling, e'en most to suffocation. The señorita helped us right willingly to remove what of food we needed, and water—the which was stored in large earthen jars called "ollas" by the Spanish—to the hole in the chapel floor, down which once more dropped Eli, to whom I handed what we had gathered. Not a moment too soon, either, did we swiftly follow after, for the smoke and flames filled the great room as we left it and essayed a venture in the dungeon. I seized the maiden by the arms, and gently lowered her to Eli, who took her as if she had been made of glass, and as reverently as if she were an angel, depositing her on a heap of our effects. I then leaped after her, and, with Eli's assistance, drew the marble slab over the aperture, leaving



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"HE HELD HIS CANDLE HIGH."

See p. 259.

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merely a crack open for air. Then we lighted candles and looked around, the señorita and I for the first time viewing the gruesome scene that presented itself to our eyes.

“’T ain’t jest the place we would choose to live in all the time,” said Eli, noticing our look of dismay; “but it ’ll serve our pu’pose while the fire lasts, I guess. Plenty of comp’ny, anyhow, and the diff’rence betwixt them and us is that they ’ve got to stay here while we ’re likely to git away after the fire ’s gone out.” He held his candle high, so that we could sweep our glance along the walls of the dungeon, and revealed a sight that was enough to strike terror to a heart less stout than the señorita’s, or even mine, for the walls were lined with grinning, ghastly skeletons, all ranged in rows—the last remains of men who had once lived and moved as we then lived and moved, but now transfixed by death. They were dressed as they must have been when alive, and all were leaning against the walls, kept in place by bands about their

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crumbling remains. It was a sickening sight, and the maiden turned gasping to me, hiding her head for a space against my shoulder. Then I felt strong enough myself to withstand the sickening sensation that had begun to creep o'er me, for, my strength being necessary to support that frail girl, I summoned it back and felt equal to any emergency.

Despite the terrors then encompassing us on every hand, I felt an actual joy to think that this maiden turned to me for comfort and support. It had always been my desire to have a sister, to love and to cherish, and perhaps—thought I at that moment—perhaps this gentle being will supply a sister's place in my heart. I thanked God that He had given me some one to care for, and hoped occasion might arise by which I could prove myself worthy of her confidence.

So absorbed was I in the thought that I was scarcely aroused when a tremendous crash proclaimed that some of the timbers had fallen

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from the roof. This was followed by a swirl of smoke and cinders, and, the hot air forcing itself into our retreat, we were nearly suffocated. Crash followed crash, until at last all the timbers had fallen in and the walls alone of the chapel were left standing. The heat was terrific, and the blinding smoke that filled the room and penetrated e'en to the dungeon pit, added to our discomfort. We could scarce breathe, but yet dared not remove the slab above us for fear we should be roasted alive; and e'en after the flames had spent their fury and the roar of the fire had subsided we still crouched in our living grave, silent and trembling, fearing to leave it lest perchance those who had set the fire should yet gain entrance to the building and slay us, after all.

"'T ain't very nice here, that 's a fact," said Eli, his voice muffled by the noise without; "but it 's a blame sight better 'n going out and taking the chances. Them that set the fire may be right after it, to make sure we 're dead, so the

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best thing we can do is play possum 's long 's we can stand it."

But no one came to disturb us, and, after the heat had subsided somewhat and the smoke had cleared away, Eli and I ventured to lift the slab ; though we nearly dropped it back upon our heads, through its being so hot as to burn our fingers withal when we first essayed it. Hot ashes and cinders, too, rained down upon us as we slid it to one side and peered forth ; or rather as I did, standing upon Eli's shoulders and looking fearsomely out upon the dismal scene. Nothing met my eye, however, but the bare, smoke-blackened walls and the smouldering rubbish on the floor, so I reported to Eli that I thought we might venture out, at least into the room above. He was of the same opinion, and, after he had assisted me to gain the floor, I reached down and drew the señorita up beside me. Then we both helped our friend out, after he passed up the food and water, neither of which had we touched. A useless labor, all this, one may say ;

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but we knew not what to provide for when we descended into the dungeon, and had to meet all possible emergencies in advance.

So here we were, after having passed through the fiery furnace, after having descended into the chamber of the dead, right back where we had started from, and none the worse for our experience, save for the bad air we had breathed and the shock to our nerves. And I was the gainer, methinks, for I had gained the confidence of the maiden, who, having once given her trust to me, seemed not desirous to withdraw it. That is, she now trusted me without reserve, not questioning my motives, but seeming to believe that I would eventually save her, and finally conduct her to her father and sister. Her trust in me gave me strength, as I have said, and it was a pure delight to look ever and again into her beautiful eyes, seeing there naught but implicit faith and confidence.

The silence continuing for an hour, at least, Eli proposed that we shoot back the bolts of the

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big door and peer out into the corridor, if even we should not venture farther. The señorita clutched my arm when this was broached, and begged us not to take any unnecessary risks upon ourselves. "Why haste to leave this place?" she asked. "We are surely safe here, even if restrained of our liberty. We have food enough to last a month; we need not go forth yet. Let us stay until all danger is past. But yet—but yet," she added, "there is this chance if we go forth—that we may be of service to such as the pirates may have left suffering from wounds. Oh, I cannot tell what is best. I leave it to you, my friends."

Woman-like, she had begun to beg us to do a thing, and then had changed her mind and feared we might do it.

"Well, ma'am," said Eli, drawing circles in the hot ashes with the end of his wooden leg the while he spake, "it's jest this way, ma'am: If we stay we're jest as safe's we were before and no safer. As you say, we've got plenty to

eat and drink; and then ag'in, as you say, we might do a good deal of good by going out and a-hunting up the wounded and suffering. There's two sides to this ere question, and Hump and I 'll leave it for you to decide for us."

"I—I would like to succor the suffering, albeit there be such," she replied, sweetly and modestly, "and as far as my life is concerned I am ready to risk it in the endeavor. But it is a poor life, and not worth so much as yours, I ween. Still, if you will go, I go also."

"Spoken like a brave girl," exclaimed Eli. "But, as to the wuth of our lives, the good Lord only knows. I know this: I wish I had as few sins to answer for as you have. Bless your sweet soul, my child, you 're like an angel from heaven in your innocence. Ain't she, Hump? Say, boy, ain't she the sweetest, purtiest girl you ever see?"

This outspoken praise from the old man might have been embarrassing had we been in different circumstances; and, as it was, I felt the blood

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rush to my face as I nodded my head in assent. The señorita blushed rosy red, then the blood left her face almost as quickly as it had mounted to her cheeks. She looked at Eli in some wonder, at first perhaps not comprehending his meaning, then she stole a glance at me, and, seeing my confusion, burst into a laugh. It was the most musical peal of laughter I ever heard, and it was refreshing to my soul, for we had endured so much of sadness of late it seemed there was to be nothing else.

I, too, laughed in sheer happiness, to think that she could so far forget, e'en if for but a moment, the terrible happenings of the past hours, and then Eli, too, caught the infection and joined in. It was but for an instant that the girl allowed herself to be merry, for the next moment there came to her a realizing sense of our true condition, and the tears followed hard after the merriment. Then, seeing the effect her tears had upon me, perchance by my rueful countenance, she smiled through her tears, and it was like

sunshine through a shower, or more like the bow of beauty and of promise that God set in the heavens as a token. But whatever the cause of all this, the effect was that of a refreshing shower. The atmosphere was cleared, and henceforth we knew and understood each other better than before.

“Well,” said Eli, after all was over, “guess we ’d better make a try of it; had n’t we? We’ll all go together, and live and die together. Ain’t that it, ma’am?” The señorita nodded her pretty head, gathered her mantilla about her most gracefully, as if going out to church, placed a hand in one of mine, and stood by me quietly, though quivering with suppressed excitement, the while Eli shot back the great bolts, one after another.

“Hold your musquet ready, Hump,” he said, warningly. “There might be somebody hiding behind the door. So, when I throw it open, jest you stand ready to shoot, if need be. Look to your flint and priming now; here goes!” With

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that he threw open the door, and, the señorita having loosened her clasp on my hand, I threw my musquet up at "ready" and stood awaiting an attack. But none came. In the corridor, which we could see stretching away before us, by stepping through the doorway and peering around the angle of the wall, nobody was in sight, and the silence of death reigned throughout. We breathed sighs of relief, all of us, and gathering up his arms, consisting of a brace of pistols, a cutlass and a musquet, Eli stumped ahead, insisting, as usual, to lead the van. I followed, with the señorita close behind, and in this order we went forth to see what we could find.

Emerging from the convent doorway, we came into the main street of the city, and there we first saw evidences of the terrible strife that had taken place. The walls of many houses were still spattered with blood, and here and there lay a contorted corpse, while the flocks of carrion crows, circling overhead and waddling

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through the street, betokened that a ghastly banquet had been prepared for them by the human brutes who had invaded this peaceful place and put its people to the sword.

“Don’t you think, ma’am, you’d better go back and wait for us in the convent?” asked Eli of the señorita.

“Yes, please, do,” I also entreated, for I feared, as did Eli, that the scenes which we knew could not but soon be disclosed would cause her infinite pain, and perhaps be more than she could bear. But she shook her head, though her face blanched and her lips were too rigid for her to form a word in reply.

Finally, she whispered: “I must go on with you. The worst, I know, has happened, and we may find our friends and neighbors slain, all of them; but I cannot stay alone.” We said no more, but again took up our march for the fort, our hearts almost stilled with apprehension.

I would fain not tell what we found there, but the slain lay in heaps around the walls.

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And—the most fearsome sight that heaven ever looked upon—there lay the nuns and maidens who had been driven by heartless Morgan to their death. It was like a second massacre of Saint Ursula and her hapless virgins, and I thought the señorita would die of heartbreak as she groped her way about, finding here a friend and there one who had been a companion, amongst the scores who had been so ruthlessly cut down.

CHAPTER XIX

A VOYAGE ON A GOLD-LADEN GALLEON

THE days that ensued were so filled with horrors that I would rather pass them by, were they not so important in the unfolding of this narrative ; but they formed links in the chain that connected us once more with the pirates, whom we had hoped forever gone from our sight. How we lived I know not, and especially how the señorita survived the horrid sights that met her gaze on every hand. As much as possible, Eli and I kept her in the background, while we went among the dead and gave them Christian burial. Not many people were left alive, though a few had hidden in the forest behind the town and some had survived their wounds.

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The governor of the fort we found dead amongst a heap of slain, he having paid the price for his mistake in allowing the buccaneers to approach the walls of the fort without training his guns upon them. As we afterward learned from one of his soldiers who survived the attack, he perceived his error when Morgan brought up the maidens to place the scaling-ladders against the walls, and, rather than survive such a shameful deed, he fought until cut down. If he had not been slain by the enemy, the soldier said, he would have fallen upon his own sword, for there was naught else to do after having (though perforce) fired upon his own countrywomen. He was a noble soul, and in the great accounting hereafter, to which all must come, he will doubtless fare well as compared with such as Morgan and Mansvelt, whose souls were stained with innocent blood.

The buccaneers had departed, but not until they had, as they thought, put every living thing in Porto Bello to the sword. They even killed

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the cattle and horses in the fields; they razed the walls of the fort, and sailed away, bearing immense treasure; but whither they had gone we knew not; only Eli surmised, from what he had overheard on our voyage hither, that they would steer for the isle of Catalina, or perchance for Chagres, whence the isthmus might be crossed and the rich city of Panama invested. But we were to ascertain soon whither they had sailed, and to find that it was not to either of the destinations we had supposed probable. They had left no vessel afloat in the harbor, having scuttled and sunk all they took not away with them, so we were in a quandary as to how we might escape this pestilential spot.

A way was provided, but it was not the one we would have chosen had the matter been left to us. Nearly a week after we had sailed forth from the chapel, where we had been consigned, as the buccaneers imagined, to a dreadful death, we were gladdened by the sight of a sail on the western horizon. Having been for days engaged

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in burying the dead and succoring the wounded (in which occupation the señorita had proved a veritable angel of mercy, toiling night and day without a murmur and enduring incredible privations), we were gladdened, I say, e'en though the sail might have been one pertaining to a pirate ship.

God worketh in a most wonderful way to further the designs of those who trust in Him. It proved that the approaching sail was a Spanish galleon, one of a fleet which had set out from the isthmus for Spain, but, becoming crippled through an accident to its rudder, it had turned about and sought succor at Porto Bello. As it loomed larger and larger, the hope in our hearts grew stronger, for we knew, as soon as we saw the flag of Spain, that we had naught to fear. We gathered at the landing-place of the port, and there waved ever and anon a large white flag, in order that the master of the galleon might be made aware that there were friends ashore. For, seeing no boats in the harbor or

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fishing along the shore, as would have been natural, and, moreover, seeing the fort in ruins, he would have been suspicious, and perhaps have sheered off and left the port altogether.

"It won't do to let her get away," said Eli, waving the white banner vigorously. "We don't want to stay in this here hole any longer 'n we can help. For, what with the lack of living comp'ny and the many dead that it has been impossible for us to bury, there 's no knowing what might happen. We 'll all get fever, anyhow, if we stay here another week, I 'm conceiting. Ah, there she heaves to; she 's sending a boat overboard; now the men are tumbling into it; now they 're rowing this way. Hurray! guess, we 'll be rescood this time, though I misdoubt what they 'll do to me when they find out I 'm a buccaneer."

"But why should they find it out?" asked the señorita. "I shall not tell, nor will Señor Humphrey, I am very sure."

"Of course not," I answered with warmth,

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“And so far as that goes, I ’m just as much of a buccaneer as Eli is, though not quite so long at the business. But he ’s going to swear off; are n’t you, Eli, and not be a buccaneer any more?”

“If the good Lord ’ll let me,” answered the old buccaneer. “But my intentions don’t seem to amount to much, for I ’ve sworn off more ’n forty times in the past twenty years, and something or other ’s always turned up to yank me back ag’in into the ranks. Now, ma’am, and Hump, you hear me say ’t, I ’ll foreswear the buccaneer’s calling if the Lord will only let me; but, you also hear me say ’t, something ’ll happen to prevent me from escaping from the clutches of bully Morgan and Monseer Mansvelt. It does seem ’s though they had a grip on every man that ’s once in their service that could n’t be shook. Now, here comes a boat from a Don’s great galleon, and we presoom that ’t will take us to Spain, or else some other Spanish possession; but, mark my words, I b’lieve ’t

will bear us right back ag'in into the buccaneer's jaws. Sorry to seem so doleful, ma'am, but them 's my sentiments, and I can't give out no other."

"I would like to get back to Spain," said the señorita, thoughtfully; "but first I wish to see my papa and my sister, and take them with me. Do you think, Señor Humphrey, that the captain of the galleon might be prevailed upon to call with us at Tortuga, even if just for an hour, to take them away? It seems that my heart will break with all the dread doings of the past weeks and this uncertainty."

The maiden looked so wan, and withal gazed so beseechingly into my eyes, that I fain would have given my life to serve her. But she knew that I would honestly divulge my opinion, even if it were adverse to her desires. So I told her that even were it possible for the master of the Spanish ship to change his course and sail northwardly to Tortuga, it would hardly be discreet for him to do so, peradventure he might meet up

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with the pirate fleet. Still, we would consult him, and anyway ask him to bear us from this port."

"But I do not want to leave unless I can go to my papa and my sister," declared the señorita. And I know that if I can lay the matter before the captain of the galleon, and provided he be a true son of Spain, he will even run the risk of his life to accomplish my desires. As for money—wealth—I can reward him by vastly more than the worth of his vessel, for my papa would not regard any price for my return to him, as he has treasures untold at his castle in Andalusia."

"True, my lady," I rejoined; "and I trust the captain will be open to argument, and sooth, thou knowest that both Eli and myself would consider no risk too great if we might accomplish thy desires. I was merely telling of the objections that might be raised, in order that thou mightest not be disappointed."

"Thou art a true friend, Señor Humphrey,

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for thou dost not mislead one ; still, let me hope for the best until the worst is known.”

Meanwhile the boat approached to land and came within hail. A gallant looking man in uniform sat at the helm, and a sturdy company of musqueteers held their arms ready at command while the sailors rowed to shore. Eli and I hastened to aid in drawing the boat upon the sands, and the man at the helm lost no time in leaping ashore and interrogating us as to the cause of the desolation on every hand. He did not at first see the señorita, for she had held herself aloof ; but as he spake Spanish, of which our understanding was but meagre, she came to the rescue from behind a wall where she had hidden herself, and appeared before us. At the sound of her musical voice, speaking to him in the liquid accents of his native tongue, the captain started violently, and, doffing his hat, bowed low as he said :

“ Methought I heard an angel, now my eyes tell me that I heard aright.”

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He was an old man with gray beard and moustachios, and he moreover had the bearing of a gentleman, so I felt that his exaggerated style of speech was not intended for mere flattery, but proceeded from custom.

“No angel, señor capitan,” replied our lovely maiden, “but a countrywoman of yours in distress. I am the daughter of Count Pasquale de los Remedios, who with my sister is now a prisoner at Tortuga. I and my friends here are survivors of a recent attack upon Porto Bello by those same buccaneers, who have departed leaving it desolate, as you may see, señor.”

The captain bowed again, this time nearly touching the ground with his forehead. “I am your servant, señorita. Much as I mourn to discover a daughter of the famous Count Pasquale in distress, I thank my stars and fortune that it has fallen to me to be the humble means of her rescue. Señorita, I and my ship, and all my men, are at your disposal. Tell your servant what he can do, and he will at once

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move heaven and earth to perform that service for the lovely daughter of the great and mighty Count Pasquale."

The captain concluded this pretty speech with another bow, sweeping the ground with his chapeau, and placed his hand on his heart as an earnest of his good intentions.

Our señorita could hardly repress a smile, despite the gravity of the occasion, yet she replied most sweetly: "Señor capitan, you do me great honor. I knew, of course, that any gallant sailor flying the flag of Spain would hold his service at the command of a maiden in distress; and, señor, I am in such dire straits that I must ask a favor of you and your men—a favor which my father will requite with the half of his estates. It is this—to take me to the isle of Tortuga, there to rescue my father and my sister from the peril they are in. Thence you may take us whither you like, whither your duty carries you; but I trust it will be to Spain."

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The captain's face, as the señorita unfolded her request, was indeed a study. As it developed that she wished him to take her to Tortuga, which he, of course, knew as a den of buccaneers, the deadly foes of all honest mariners, and especially of his nationality, his countenance became almost livid at the thought. When she had concluded, his confusion was most pitiful, for he had indeed no desire to proceed to Tortuga, neither wished he, hardly dared he, to deny the request of a fair Spanish woman, and particularly the daughter of a powerful noble like the Count de los Remedios, e'en though he were then a prisoner. He was descended from one of Spain's most ancient families and allied with some of the greatest grandees of Sevilla and Granada.

"Most noble señorita, your desire is—should be—my law; but—but, fairest daughter of my native land, I—that is, my owners—have a king's ransom concealed in the hold of yonder galleon; that is, we have gold from the Peruvian

ON A GOLD-LADEN GALLEON

mines beyond a million in value; and, moreover, one-fifth of it belongs by right of law to his majesty the king. Hence, O most worthy daughter of my country's most noble son, I dare not put my vessel in jeopardy, even for your sake. It is not that I would not lay down my very life for you; and of this mind, were I to speak to them, would be all my men, to the last one. We do not fear the bucaniers, but we fear the king's displeasure, *señorita*. Even at this moment I am far too near the pirates' rendezvous, forced to come here through stress of circumstances."

The *señorita*'s lips curled with scorn, and she flashed a look at the captain which caused him to shrink into himself like the head of a tortoise within its shell. But she said naught more than this: "Where, then, *señor*, can you take us? For we must go hence."

"I came here in search of a shipwright," he hastened to explain, "to repair a damaged rudder; but as all are, as you say, either dead or

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departed, I must sail for the next available port, which, so far as I know, is Maracaibo. There, doubtless, we shall find a Spanish frigate, with the commander of which I will use my good offices to have you taken to Tortuga."

"A thousand thanks, señor capitan; but we will trouble you only to take us hence. It may as well be Maracaibo, perhaps, as any other port, and we will trust to fortune for meeting there a commander who is not afraid of the buccaneers!"

CHAPTER XX

WHAT THE FIRE-RAFT DID AT MARACAIBO

AFTER the captain of the galleon had inspected the ruins and seen that it was hopeless to expect to repair his vessel at Porto Bello, he was in great haste to sail for Maracaibo, which port, situated on a great lake protected by forts at its narrow entrance, he thought would be safe to tarry in during the time necessary to make repairs. He would be overdue at Cadiz, owing to sailing so far out of his course already; but the repairs were necessary, and perforce must be made.

He was graciousness itself after the severe reproof he had received from the señorita, and took us aboard the galleon without asking of Eli or myself any question as to our previous calling

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or how we came to be connected with the buccaneers. There was a coolness between him and our señorita, but no lack of politeness, and, as luck would have it (he explained to her), there was a Spanish lady on her way home from Peru whose cabin she could share, and thus avoid any scandal that might otherwise arise from going on a ship unattended. I must give the captain credit for being most thoughtfully attentive to our señorita, e'en as a father might have been to a daughter; and in the minds of Eli and myself no blame could be laid to him for refusing to jeopardize his ship, his men and his precious cargo by running into the jaws of the buccaneers. The señorita took his refusal much to heart, she had so much at stake; and, being a woman, she could not understand his reason for refusal; whereas it was plain enough for any man of sense.

"Can't blame the old capt'in a bit," said Eli to me, when we were out of earshot of them both. "Of course, the gal 's all cut up 'cause he won't

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put about and run slap into the wust den of pirates in the Caribbean, or for that matter in the whole world. I tell you, Hump, I was awful 'fraid he or she would appeal to you or me for our 'pinion, and though it would have gone ag'inst the grain to say I agreed with the capt'in, seems to me I 'd uv had to do it. Odds blood! but it's hard on her, though, to be carried away from her father and sister when she thought she had a right to demand a safe passage right to where they are. But she's got pluck, Hump, hain't she? Did you see the old Don curl up, jest like the toe of a burnt boot, when she flashed them eyes of hern at him and puckered up her dainty lips. I bet he 'd have gi'n something to be out of the scrape with her approval, ruther 'n her scorn, eh, Hump?"

I admitted to Eli that the captain's position was unenviable, to say the least, and also that I could not but agree that he had decided wisely in refusing her request. "Still," I added, "it makes it all the harder for us, Eli, for we are in

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honor bound to bring the señorita and her kin together, somehow. Just now we are sailing still farther away from Tortuga, and who knows but we may reach old Spain itself before we get through?"

"Jest what I 've been thinking myself," said Eli. "But I don't care if they take us to the ends of the airth, I 'm bound to get back to Tortuga and try to rescoo our friends there, if it takes years."

"Yes," I assented. "Think of poor John there all alone in the hut watching for our coming, day by day, and guarding a secret which, if it were known, would probably cost him his life."

"Oh, yes, I have thunk, and thunk, and so far I can't see no way out of the fix we 're in, Hump, 'nless a miracle happens; which ain't likely. What I 'm afraid of is meeting up ag'in with the Brethring. Howsomever, s' long 's there 's life there 's hope; and if we get killed there won't be nothing to worry about. We 've

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slipped cable now, that 's sart'in, and are sailing with a free sheet and a flowing sea."

The quarters aboard the galleon were quite comfortable, but the men were all suspicious from the first, eyeing us askance and apparently desirous of picking a quarrel with us, on account of the fact having leaked out that we were erst-while buccaneers. Both Eli and myself were well put to it to avoid drawing our cutlasses and having the matter out at first hands; but the thought of what we had at stake—of the señorita, who now depended wholly upon us to fulfill the promise I had made of taking her to her father, and of poor John, who full oft tugged hard at my heart-strings—these thoughts stayed our hands when oft our heads were hot.

And we were sailing into the unknown, but with a certainty of some exciting adventure. In due course we sighted the peninsula of Coro, which juts out from the Venezuelan main, and then the bight that gave entrance into the Gulph of Maracaibo. As we drew nigh to the narrow-

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est part of the strait that gives into the gulph we saw several large ships lying at anchor, the which, after closely scanning through the glass, the captain joyfully announced to be Spanish frigates. A great shout went up as the tidings were communicated to the sailors; for the galleon's crew had grave doubts as to the wisdom of sailing so close to the main at this time, knowing well that the buccaneer's fleet was scouring the sea in this direction.

Their troubles seemed now to be o'er; but in sooth they had only begun; while our own were dreadfully augmented—as will soon appear in this narrative. We approached the fleet with colors flying and every token of our joy made manifest; but as we drew near we could not but note that all the frigates were drawn up in line of battle array, with ports open, guns thrust out and nettings spread along the bulwarks, as if to repel boarders.

As we came within speaking distance a voice hailed us through a trumpet from the foremost

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frigate, ordering us to sail to the rear of the line, run out what guns we had and take position to make a desperate defence. When our luckless captain asked the trouble, he was saluted with a good round Spanish oath, and told to sail up the lake if he wished to be set upon by bucaniers. The dread word was passed from lip to lip, and soon reached the group nearest Eli and myself. We were standing a little aloof, as usual, but the word was wafted to us, and caused Eli to prick up his ears instanter. He dashed to the side and swung himself into the rigging, whence he could get a view ahead, hopping up the ratlines on one foot with wonderful alacrity. Shading his eyes with his hands, he took a long look up the lake, then called down for me to join him. When I reached his side he pointed ahead, and asked me if I recognized any familiar craft in a bunch of vessels that I could see gathered less than two miles away.

The question need not have been asked, as he well knew, for the fleet gathered there was

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none other than the one we had set sail in from Tortuga for Porto Bello, and which we had hoped never to see again. There it was, the admiral's frigate in the midst, with the black flag, death's head and cross-bones and all that proclaimed the craft to be the pirate's own. I felt my heart stand still, it seemed to me then, and looked at Eli anxiously for his opinion.

"Well," he said, in answer to my gaze, "they 'reall there: 'Big Bess,' the 'Holy Carrack,' 'Santa Maria' and all the rest, sure 's musquets can shoot better 'n arquebuses and musketoons. They ain't licked us yet, to be sure, but there ain't a bit of doubt but they will. The Spaniards think they 've got 'em penned up and ready to s'render, but they don't know Bully Morgan and Mounseer Mansvelt so well as we do, Hump. Here the Spanish admiral's got his ships stretched right across the channel, thinking prob'ly that he can stop the Brethring from coming out. Why, sakes alive, Hump, when they make up their minds to come out they won't

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ask permission of nobody, but they 'll jest come; see if they don't!"

"But how can they, Eli? They can't break through this line of battleships, every one of which carries heavier guns than any of the buccaneers' fleet."

"Don't know, Hump, my son, but they will when they git good and ready, my word for it. I have an idee as to how they 'll do it—least-wise, as to how *I'd* do it—but it may n't be their'n."

In the meanwhile our ship had worn about and taken her place in the line, nearest shore from mid-channel. All our guns were out and matches lighted, pikes and cutlasses had been passed around, and nettings stretched along the bulwarks, after the manner of the men-of-war. Our galleon had a tremendously high poop, like a castle, and stood very well up from the water, so that we had little to fear from boarders, at least first along in the fight.

A great hubbub from the ships caused us to

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look more closely up the lake, and there we saw a ship—one of the biggest—detached from the buccaneer fleet and slowly drifting toward us. The men-of-war, lying broadside to the approaching ship, trained their guns upon her, and it looked as though she were drifting straight to destruction, for our ships were chained together, and she could by no means get through, perchance she might survive their fire. She approached within a mile, within half a mile, and nearer yet, until we could see the men in her rigging and upon her deck. The great guns, and e'en the demi-culverins, were pouring in their shots by now, and yet on came the doomed craft, drifting straight toward the flagship of the Spanish admiral. Some of the cannon were firing hot shot, and when at last flames were seen to burst out amidship a mighty shout went up from the Spanish ships.

“Oh, the fools,” yelled Eli. “Oh, these Spanish fools! That fire ain't caused by their hot shot, Hump. She 's a fire-ship!”

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It was even so. A fire-ship surely she was, and by this time the flames had burst out all over her. The wily buccaneers had filled her with combustibles; had placed wooden men in her rigging and on her decks to draw the Spaniards' fire, while a small crew of reckless spirits was concealed below biding what might betide, be it death or be it victory. The most desperate of the pirates was dexterously handling the helm, for he headed the craft directly at the Spanish flag-ship, and betime the admiral saw his peril it was too late. He trained all his broadside guns upon her in a vain attempt to sink her before they came together; he then tried to claw off out of her course; but this he could not do, for he was chained, or cabled, fore and aft to the vessel in front and in the rear of him. The instant the fire-ship struck the admiral's frigate she was fastened to it by grappling-irons—the work of men who until that moment had been invisible—and the flames leaped like lightning from the rigging of one ship to the other.

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Wrapped as was the fire-ship in vast sheets of flame, it was but a short time before the admiral's gallant frigate was also enveloped, and before our captain could detach the galleon from the perilous chain the buccaneers were upon us.

They had followed hard after, like wolves in the wake of a forest fire, in order to strike before the Spaniards could recover from the confusion into which the advent of the fire-ship had cast them. Through the flame and the smoke they sent cannon shot fast and most furious, and, what was yet worse, by far and more destructive, hollow shot or shells filled with explosives, fired from cast-iron guns, which some call mortars or howitzers, and which the buccaneers captured from French ships, thus having them in use even before England knew of them. These fiery messengers of death seemed endowed with the malific spirit of the pirates themselves, and sought us out as if alive and veritable demons of the invisible world. The canopy of smoke that hung over the lake obscured all

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except objects immediately near us, and prevented us from discerning the pirate ships; but, as we presented a broader and more compact body, the exact position of which was known to the attacking ships, we could not escape. In vain our captain tried to escape by hoisting sail and bearing out toward the sea. In its crippled condition the galleon could not make headway, and we only drifted back upon the enemy. We were, in sooth, the first to surrender after the admiral's frigate, for over our sides came pouring a flood of pirates, pistoled and cutlassed, after the manner of them when in search of prey.

The Spanish captain had asked us if we would fight them, and we responded by baring our arms, loosening our belts with our pistols and cutlasses therein, and priming our musquets. This was before the advent of the boarders, and we had in return asked of him but one favor—that we might stand at the gangway to the ladies' cabin (which was far up in the castle and would prob-

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ably be the last portion of the ship attacked, unless cut through by cannon-shot) and be furnished with all the fire-arms he could spare from his own men. He smiled sadly at this request, saying that he feared there would be but too many arms to spare, his men not seeming to have stomach for a fight. But he willingly granted our request, and thus it was that when the crisis came—when the deluge of boarders poured over the bulwarks—brave old Eli stood by my side, and both of us were on guard at the door of the cabin. And our señorita stood also with us, smiling into our eyes and filling our hearts with a courage invincible.

CHAPTER XXI

A FIGHT TO THE FINISH FOR HONOR

THE señorita stood with us, but when she first appeared Eli and I did not know it was she. There emerged from the cabin a handsome young man, or boy, but brown as to complexion and with eyes black as sloes. He had a sword in his hand, and as he came to the spot at which we had taken our stand he said: "By 're favor, gentles, I will stand with you through the fight that is coming."

"We are here," I replied, "to defend the ladies in the cabin below, whose honor may be imperiled if the pirates succeed in boarding our ship. The fight will doubtless be a stiff one, and you had better consider twice before engaging in it, young sir."

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“Mayhap it be,” rejoined the lad, “but if I die it shall be in gallant company. But you speak of ladies, señor. Let me tell you, there are no ladies down below, only one lady, a señora from Peru.”

“What?” I exclaimed. “Is there not a señorita, also, the daughter of Don Pasquale del Mar de los Remedios of Spain?”

“No, señor,” replied the lad, albeit with a twinkle in his eye. “She is not there. In sooth, I have not seen her since—”

“Since you looked in the glass,” interrupted Eli, and slapping me on the shoulder. “Hump, you dolt, here stands the señorita before you now. Why, it’s as plain to me as the nose on my face; but I can’t account, of course, for the nut-brown complexion.”

“But I can,” said the señorita, with a merry laugh; “I made it myself, and I did hope that neither of you would know me in this disguise. But you will allow me to stay with you, will you not?”

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“Methinks it would be better for you to remain below, ma’am,” replied Eli, seriously. “Not that we would n’t like your company, to be sure ; but the young master and myself have planned to fight back to back when the tight squeeze comes, and I ’m reely afraid you ’d be rather in the way.”

The maiden looked at me appealingly. “And are you of the same mind, too?” she enquired, with a world of pleading in her eyes.

“Our friend has spoken truly,” I answered, “that the prospective peril is great, and we can render you, and perhaps ourselves, greater service if you should remain out of sight.”

“So be it, then,” she said with a sigh, the light all going out of her eyes. “But I cannot endure the thought of my brave friends out fighting for me all alone, and I so near and yet rendering no aid.”

“Pardon me, ma’am,” said Eli ; “but you can aid us if so be it seems good to you. That is, if you know how to load and prime a musquet.

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You can load the musquets as we fire them, and pass them up to us through the companion-way, if you wish."

"Oh, Señor Humphrey, may I?" The light had danced back into her eyes by now, and though I felt there might be some risk in her exposing herself somewhat in passing us the musquets from below, I could not but grant her request. She seemed overjoyed and danced delightedly up and down, like a child, forsooth. "Oh, I know how to load the musquets," she exclaimed—"yes, and to discharge them, too, for my papa taught me when I was but a child. We were once besieged in our castle at Ronda by a band of bandits, and all our family, as well as our retainers, had to serve watch and watch, until the soldiers came and drove the bandits away."

"These pirates now approaching be worse than any Spanish bandits, I trow," muttered old Eli. "And they are getting too close for comfort, ma'am ; so please go below at once, and

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allow us free scope for the swing of our cutlasses. By my soul, but there may be no stemming the tide that is now rolling upon us. And they 're no Dagoes this time, nor Dutchmen, but brother buccaneers, trained to arms and having no knowledge of what the word fear means, my children."

By now the uproar was terrific, for the buccaneers had gained the lower decks and were surging toward the castle. Between us and the main body of the fighting multitude stood the captain and a choice few of his picked men, who had stood aloof as a reserve; but even this party was now actively engaged, and every moment seeming to be on point of giving way before the onrush of the buccaneers. We on the castle could see but imperfectly, being now and again enveloped in the dense clouds of smoke that rolled athwart the decks and surged out to sea. Lurid flames, like lightning flashes, shot out from the clouds, and the belchings of cannon

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and musquetry were more terrific than any thunder that ever greeted human ears.

With a farewell glance, in which her solicitude was expressed most vividly, the señorita fled down the stairs and to the cabin, whence the señora from Peru was sending forth such piercing shrieks as to be heard above the din of battle. It was but a moment later that she reappeared, bearing in her arms a cuirass of leather and steel, which, without e'en asking permission, she proceeded to buckle upon me forthwith.

I ventured a lame protest, feeling much abashed, but she placed a hand over my mouth. "Nay, nay, brother mine, say not a word. This cuirass is for thy protection; it may save thy life. And I have another which is for Señor Eli." Saying which she disappeared, and eftsoon came forth with yet another breastplate, which she girded about the old buccaneer. Eli seemed to be well used to the breastplate, and welcomed it warmly, thanking the señorita for her thoughtfulness; but my cuirass chafed me sorely, and but for

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appearing unthankful I should have doffed it eftsoon. But I had no time for thought of whether or no the armor chafed or fitted like a glove, for now the enemy were upon us. They had broken through the frail barrier opposed by the captain and his men, who had fallen or fled, so that nothing was left to prevent the storming of the castle. Loud were the yells of the infuriated buccaneers as they found their pathway to the castle open. They rushed forward like wolves on the scent of prey, and Eli shouted out to me: "Boy, yon villains know we are here, mark my word! When the Brethren stop not to cut the throats of wounded or knock them on the head, they have more important prey in view. Since they pass the Spaniards by, my boy, they must be on the trail of somebody they value more highly, eh?" I said nothing in reply, but knew in my heart that we were the quarry they were after, we and the women down below; and to myself I could not but admit that their chances seemed good for the getting. It

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should not be alive, however—that was the resolve of both Eli and myself; and we knew the señorita well enough to be assured that her sentiment was the same. In sooth, her last words to me buzzed in my ears like a swarm of bees, and nearly made me blind with the rush of blood to my brain, for these were the words she whispered after she had girded the cuirass on me: “Brother, dear, do not let them capture me. I will not kill myself until the last moment; but, oh, my dearest friend, the crowning act of your surpassing goodness to me will be to kill me, rather than that I should be made a pirate’s captive.”

Her hands were on my shoulders, her eyes lookingly pleadingly into mine, and what could I do but promise—promise, e’en though the thought of it was like death to me! But we were in a forlorn hope, and though we were calm, it was with the calmness of despair. With a smile that she might have worn to meet a lover or mother, the señorita left us to assume her task of caring for the musquets, the which, as we

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emptied of their loads, we passed down to her—that is, when we had the time to do so; but as the press came upon us there were moments when we could not e'en do this act, simple as it may seem.

On came the buccaneers: those in front pressed forward by their companions behind and forced ahead, whether it were their will or no. These were easy marks for us, and we dropped them so fast, the one after the other, with the accurate aim of our musquets and the broadsides from our musketoons, that the survivors fain would have made halt for a parley, I ween. But those ahead could not stop unless it were to stumble and be trodden on by those in the rear, and when they did go down it was for aye, not to rise again.

I did not like this sort of warfare, for it seemed too much like cold-blooded murder. Still, as Eli Herrick warned me when I allowed a fair shot to pass, and was the means of the object thereof, getting almost within arm's-length of us,

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it was either their lives or ours ; and more than the lives of the two of us—that also of the señorita and her chaperone. Eli put a bullet into the man I had spared, without any apparent compunction, and then urged me to be more mindful of my aim. I do not mean for it to be understood that we ourselves were not in peril from bullets, both of pistol and musquet, which came whizzing about like hornets and smote everything about us, apparently, but fortunately missed their most important marks. The señorita did her duty bravely and well, her white hand appearing with a loaded musquet whene'er there was need—which was full oft, in sooth. But the moment came when no one man or woman could load them fast enough—when they had perforce to be cast aside and the pistols snatched hastily, then the cutlasses. And, to speak the very truth, I was more than glad when it came to short-arm play with the blades ; for now it was man to man, the best one to win. The odds were greatly against us, at least a

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hundred to one, e'en after we had mowed down heaps of the enemy; but what else was there to do than to stand and meet it? Nothing, forsooth—nothing but to prevail or to die—and well we knew it. Above the din of voices rose a shout that commanded our attention. It was from one who recognized us and fain would have a surrender. “We will spare you. Throw down your arms,” he said. But we were not deceived, and still fought on.

We would be spared, yes—but only for the torture. “No surrender!” shouted Eli. “No surrender, boy!” He might have spared his breath, for this was far from my thoughts then, if, in sooth, I had any thought. As at the time when assailed on board the “Nancy” I blindly parried cut and thrust, with no particular individual foe in my eye, only one gigantic demon at whom I used my whole endeavor. But out of the smoke and flame came to me a familiar voice, which, e'en in my madness, I recognized. It was that of old Jaques, who stumbled almost

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into my arms as I was hewing down a composite giant who looked like a veritable demon. Eli did not hear, or, hearing, did not recognize the voice, and would have cut our old friend from chin to waist had I not interposed my blade at the instant. The diversion made Eli pause aghast, and, sweeping the foe in front of him with a glance—such as could be seen—he grasped the situation as a whole and executed a most masterly move. Seizing old Jaques by the legs, he hurled him down the companion-way, and then shouted in my ear: “Back, Hump! Get into the cabin! It is our only hope!”

Not less quickly than he I saw that this movement was our only salvation—if perchance there were any in store for us—and tumbled over him down the steps. A white hand reached out to me as I fell, and seizing it I took along with me our heroine, before she had a chance to utter e'en a protest. At the foot of the steps there we lay for the space of two full breaths, all in a heap. And it was a miracle that all of us were

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not cut by naked blades or crushed to pulp by the fall. But none was badly injured, and the first to extricate himself was Eli, who bethought himself of the hatch o'erhead, which he drew across the opening and secured with its massive bolts before the raging buccaneers above had hardly missed us. This act gave us a few moments' respite, which we improved in untangling the snarl and planning what we should do next. I had bethought me, despite the swiftness of our descent, to try to break the force of the fall for the señorita, and she was apparently uninjured; at least she declared herself unhurt, though her face paled and she gasped for breath as if in pain. I assisted her to a seat, first of all, and when she had regained her composure we held the council of war.

Old Jaques was the first to speak; that is, if I except the señora from Peru, who was still lifting up her voice, though now faint from continuous shouting. We pacified her as best we could, the señorita whispering words of encourage-

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ment and patting her hands the while we held the council.

“Ze firs’ sing” (thing), said old Jaques, “ees to get out of here.”

“Seems to me,” retorted Eli, who was nursing a bad bruise on his chin and gazing ruefully at his wooden leg—“the fust thing was to get in here. Now, how in the name of goldarnation air we going to get out? But I agree with Jaques, we ’ve got to git out before them divels up above get in.”

The señora ceased her wailing for a moment and said something to our señorita, who beckoned to me. As I sat down beside her she said: “The señora tells me the cabin windows are not far above the water, and that there is a boat beneath them—or there was not many hours ago—and she suggests an escape that way.”

“That ’s good as far as it goes,” said Eli, “and I guess it ’s the only plan open to us—provided it is open. But, please, tell her that we can’t do anything if she’s going to keep up

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that everlasting yowling. She 's either got to stop or else we go without her. That 's gospel truth."

The señorita whispered in her friend's ear, and the "yowling" was heard no more. The Peruvian lady was beside herself with terror, poor thing; but, when she saw she was among friends, and that her only chance for life lay in doing just as we advised, she became sane again and proved amenable to reason.

"The poor critter 's scart 'enamost to death," said Eli, apologetically, "and we can't blame her much, either. Howsomever, her hint 's a good one, and the fust thing to do—and that mighty lively, too—is to find that air boat."

The cabin of the galleon was large and occupied the entire stern of the ship, with great window-like portholes. Groping his way to one of these windows—for the cabin was but dimly lighted—Jaques peered out and downward, a moment later signifying by violent gesticulations that a boat was still there.

“ Well,” said Eli, “ don’t make a monkey of yourself, old man. Take this rope ladder and hang it out the winder. It ’ll reach the boat all right, for that ’s what it ’s here for. Now, jest you shin down that air ladder and hold it stiddy while we pass down the ladies. Hump, you take charge of the gal and I ’ll look out for her chappyrone. There ain’t no time to lose, I need n’t remind you folks. I can hear our friends a-hewing that air hatch to pieces, and it ’s about an even chance if we don’t get caught. Grab that jug of wine, Hump, and I’ll chuck in a bag of bread. There ’s likely to be a water-cask in the boat ; anyway, we ’ve got to chance it. Them musquets served us a good turn, so let’s take ’em along, and some powder and ball, too ; for Lord knows where we ’re going and what we ’re going to find. Like’s not we shall strike the little end of nowhere and find next to nothing when we get there.”

While indulging in this monologue Eli was darting this way and that, seizing upon things

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he thought we might need on the trip, and interlarding his talk with curses upon the bad luck that had caused a bullet to splinter the end of his wooden leg, so that he had hard work to keep his balance. But at last we were all in the boat, the señora behaving like a lamb, and our señorita proving a veritable angel of helpfulness. We pushed off quietly, but quickly, for the buccaneers had smashed in the hatch as Eli—the last to get aboard—had dropped into the boat, and it would not take them long to discover the means we had employed for escaping and the direction we had taken.

CHAPTER XXII

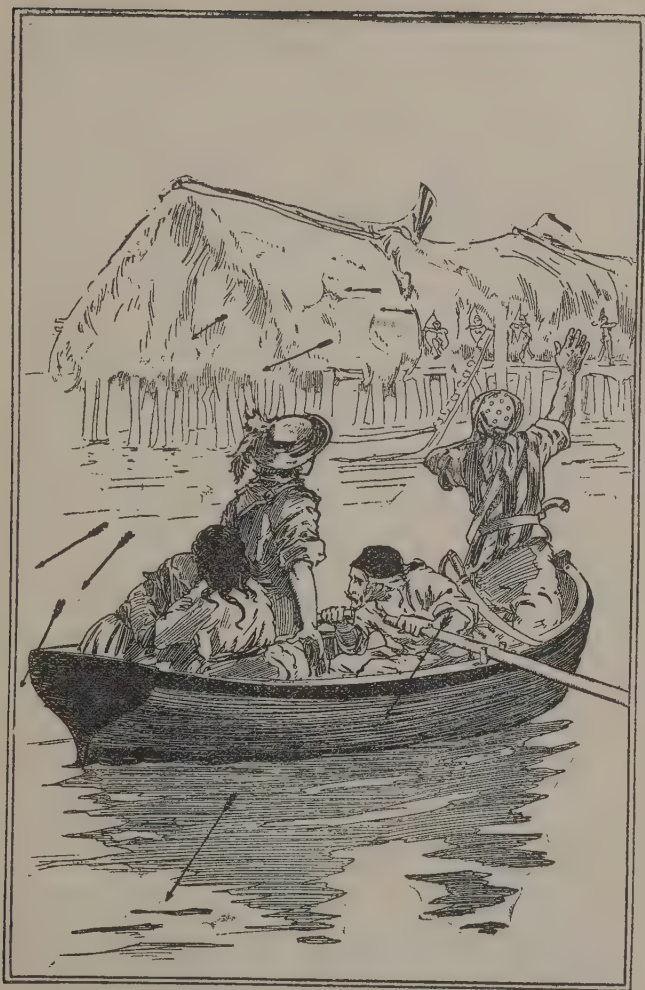
THE REVENGE OF THE LAKE-DWELLERS

THE smoke was so thick about the galleon that for a brief space it gave us shelter; but the glare of the burning ships soon lit up the sea, and it was not long that we could avail of the friendly darkness. Immediately our boat came out into the light it was the target of many a musquet, the balls from which splashed the sea around the boat, pattered against the gunwales, and a few whistled past close to our ears. One bullet, in sooth, struck the breast-plate of my cuirass with such force that, had I not had it on, I should certainly have received a severe wound, perchance a fatal one. Picking up the spent bullet, which dropped to the bottom of the boat, I showed it to the señorita, at the

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same time telling her that I probably owed my life to her thoughtfulness in providing me with the coat of mail. She smiled thereat, and said significantly that, judging from the appearance of the cuirass, that bullet was not the first one it had stopped. And certes, when I came to examine it closely, I found the marks made by near a dozen bullets, some of which had surely passed through my body had I not been so well protected. Eli's breastplate, also, bore many indentations, showing indubitably how fiercely we had been assailed and of what service our good armor had been to us. For which we duly thanked the señorita, who blushed so prettily that one might have thought her discovered in a fault, instead of doing a kindness to her friends.

It was by the grace of God, indeed, that we had not been killed, so great had been the odds against us; but we were spared to come out of the fight practically unscathed. And, moreover, though our boat became the target for a still brisker fire of musquetry, we passed through the



For Prey and Spoils.—7.

"THE INDIANS LET FLY A CLOUD OF ARROWS."

See p. 321.

fiery furnace uninjured in the least, but not, it must be confessed without some trepidation on the part of the ladies. Eli, Jaques and myself were all too busy at the oars and at the helm to pay much attention to aught else than the steering clear of the enemy. For by now all the buccaneers had closed in about the burning ships, like ravening wolves around a deer wounded to the death, yet which was still at bay and had some fight left in him. The most of them were far too busily engaged in watching their chances for boarding the Spaniards, in cutting off the fleeing crews, shooting the poor wretches in the water as they cast themselves from their flaming vessels into the sea—to search beyond the wall of fire for other possible prey. So we slipped past the last ship of the cordon and headed for the shore of the lake nearest to us then, which was the western shore, where, Eli said, was safety, could we but gain the landing-place.

“There is a colony of Lake-dwelling Indians thereabouts,” said Eli, “who have their huts over

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the water and are friendly to the Spaniards, but not to the buccaneers. If we can but make their settlement, methinks we are safe; and, moreover, if I can but find my old friend, the chief of the Lake-dwellers, I trow we shall eke wreak our revenge, for though these Indians are generally men of peace and prone to hold aloof from war, at the same time they are most valiant fighters when their blood is up. Trust me to do all possible to get it up, and have it stay there until we have 'enamost repaired our losses."

Knowing well the lay of the land, dark though it was beyond the wall of fire, Eli soon proved the verity of his assertion, for after we had rowed for little more than an hour we came suddenly upon the colony he spake of. Simultaneously with our arrival within sight of the settlement, as the huts rose ghost-like from the water, there was a great noise as if the heavens were rended. Looking fearsomely back, we saw vast sheets of flame shooting skyward, and knew

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at once that some of the ships' powder magazines had been blown up. The glare from the flames was such that, though we were full three miles from the ships, the lake on every side of us was illumined as by the sun at noonday, and revealed our boat to the Indians, who, some with musquets and others with bows and arrows, were watching from the platforms of their huts. Excited as they were by the vast noise of the battle and the sight of blazing ships, the Indians were on the alert, and at first glimpse of us let fly a cloud of arrows and shot off their musquets. Fortunately for us, their aim was bad, though their intentions were good—that is, to shoot us. But we got within hail, and, by the greatest good fortune, Eli's old friend the chief being one of the party on the platform that had saluted us so rudely, we were soon at parley with the red-skinned salvages. At first, to be sure, the chief was loath to allow us to come near the settlement; but finally Eli convinced him we were friends, and at last he recognized the voice of

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his erstwhile acquaintance ; though it had been years since last they met. Then he allowed us to row up to the hut, on the platform of which he and his crew were perched, and saluted us with a guttural grunt of satisfaction which he no doubt intended for a welcome.

Arrived at the hut, we found no means of ingress save a pole or trunk of a small tree, notched with holes for the placing of the feet, like a rude ladder such as is used in the mines of Mexico and of Peru. This pole was slippery from being long in the water, and as no one but a barefooted Indian could climb it with any degree of skill, we had great difficulty in ascending to the hut's platform, even after our boat was drawn alongside and made fast.

But the Indian chief reached down a hand for the ladies to take hold of, and while Eli and old Jaques held the boat firm I helped the señora and the señorita to climb the precarious ladder. The huts, as I have said, were built on platforms of poles over water that was about thigh-

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deep, and there was no land nearer than the shore of the lake, half a mile or more distant, except a small garden spot that was made by enclosing a space with logs and filling it with earth, and this was about twenty yards square—a fragment of earth like an island rescued from the waters of the lake.

Having helped us up to the platform, the chief stood aside and motioned us to enter the hut, which was made entirely of thatch of palm leaves, sides and roof, and with a layer of small poles for a floor. We could look through the cracks between the poles and see the water of the lake beneath the hut, which gave us at first a feeling of insecurity, though in reality the floor was strong enough. In the centre of the hut was a space covered with beaten clay, and here a fire was smouldering, with a huge iron pot above it containing a medley stew of some sort for the Indians' delectation. Hammocks were swung from each corner of the hut, and in these, at the Indian's motion, we half sat, half reclined,

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while his wives prepared for us some refreshment.

Although this chief of the Lake-dwellers possessed the impassive exterior of the Indians in general—that is, he was stolid and usually slow of speech—there seemed to be something on his mind he would fain have relieved, and he soon evinced a great curiosity as to the fight that was going on between the pirates and the Spaniards. We told him all we knew, Eli, as usual, acting as spokesman, and as we proceeded with our narration, detailing to him the cruelties of the buccaneers and the relation in which we stood to them, as well as the danger to us of ever allowing them to get us again into their clutches, his swarthy countenance became livid with suppressed rage or other excitement akin to that passion. He said little, but after we had concluded (the repast his women had been preparing being now ready), he motioned us to partake, and then, begging us to excuse him, backed out of the open doorway, and, sliding

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down the notched pole to the water, entered a canoe dug from out a log, and disappeared in the darkness.

“Wonder what he ’s up to?” said Eli, with an air of mystery, nodding his head toward the door through which the chief had disappeared. “Something or other disturbed him powerfully. Should n’t wonder but he ’s off to call a gathering of the tribe. P’raps he scents plunder off there in the lake and is going to try to get his share of it. If that ’s so don’t blame him a bit, I vum.

“But here ’s the vittels. In that air pot there ’s a stew made of all sorts of veg’tables, with a bit of meat here and there, and that other thing that looks something like a turtle, only longer ’n he is broad, is an armadiller, what they call here a ‘cachicama.’ And it ’s good, too ; so, ladies, you ’d better take some of the armadiller, if you want to be interduced to the sweetest meat in the world. The varmint ’s cooked in his own shell—that ’s what makes him look so queer.

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But don't be afraid, for the meat 's tender and wholesome."

The ladies needed considerable urging to induce them to partake of the armadillo ; and I myself will confess to some qualms at the prospect of eating thereof—for I had never before seen the creature, either live or dead, though I was told it inhabited the isle of Tortuga, where it was so prized, however, as a delicacy, that none but the chiefs of the buccaneers were allowed to eat of it. But we were all nearly famished, and, notwithstanding the repulsive appearance of the big and black iron pot (which looked as if it might have arrived with that doughty explorer, Americus de Vespucci, who first discovered these Lake-dwellers, and had been in service almost ever since without cleansing), we overcame our repugnance and ate of the meal prepared by the Indian women with somewhat even of gusto. After it was over the Indian women passed around dried leaves of the weed known as tobacco, and, all the men save myself

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producing their pipes, and filling them up, soon wreaths of fragrant smoke were passing through the thatch of the roof. The ladies lay back in their hammocks, and, overcome with fatigue and the exciting scenes they had passed through, eftsoon fell into slumber, seeing which we men were glad, for they needed such refreshment full sore.

Eli and Jaques and myself were prone to sleep, but we dared not, for at any moment the chief might return, and we all agreed that it was incumbent upon us to be vigilant, even though we had no good known cause to distrust the people whose hospitality we had sought.

“This is a good time,” remarked Eli, between the puffing at his pipe and the exhaling from his mouth of the smoke produced therefrom, “a good time, friend Jaques, for you to give us a short account of what happened while you were away, and Hump and I were left behind in Porto Bello.”

“*Certainement*,” answered Jaques, “but zey

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was so mooch happen zat it to take me all ze remaindair of ze night to remark it, frien' Eli."

"That may be," rejoined Eli, "but you can't have so much time as that. Cut your speech as short as you can; make your lingo straight as you can, with all the English you can remember and as little French as possible, and heave ahead."

And this is the gist of the story—not in poor old Jaques' "lingo"—for it would take too long in the telling—but as rendered into English by the reader's friend and humble servant, Humphrey Gilbert, none other than the writer of these adventures. It seems that after the fort had been stormed and the garrison put to the sword—(and as well all the inoffensive inhabitants of Porto Bello, including the maidens who had assisted so unwillingly in the scaling of the walls)—the pirates sacked the city of all the remaining valuables they could find and hastily departed. They at first, to be sure, essayed the capture of the church in which we had taken

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refuge, and—as the reader will recall—set fire to the roof, and, as they thought, utterly destroyed us. This was done at Morgan's instigation and against the inclination of Mansvelt, who would fain have sailed away and left us to such fate as we might find.

This last act but added fuel to the flame of hatred for each other that raged in their hearts, and when the fleet was well clear of the harbor of Porto Bello they could contain themselves no longer. Just which one began the quarrel old Jaques could not tell, being engaged in his duties, and, as a common sailor, not having cognizance of what was going on in the castle and the cabin. But it was told him by one of the men who was engaged in waiting on the chiefs that Morgan, being in the cabin with Mansvelt, began to reproach him with having encouraged me in the matter of the fight when I came near to causing his death by strangulation. He said that he would yet have my blood and put me to the torture; but Mansvelt taunted him with my

probable escape and reminded him that he had yet to catch me first. At which Morgan swore a most fearful oath that he would surely catch me, were I still alive, and make such an example of me that my end should be a warning to all buccaneers who dared disobey, and particularly maltreat their superiors.

Mansvelt then reminded Morgan that there were two meanings to the word "superior," and again taunted his lieutenant with being by far my inferior when it came to matters to be settled by sword or feat of arms. At this, said old Jaques, Morgan became beside himself with rage, and made as if to draw his sword and cut down Mansvelt on the spot. In sooth, he did so, for the latter, seeing what was coming, made haste to draw his own weapon from the scabbard and defend himself. But before he could do so Morgan ran him through the heart, and he fell forward across the table which was between them, and died before any one could raise him up.

And thus it was that, though indirectly (as I

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have said nearer the beginning of these adventures), I, Humphrey Gilbert, was the cause of Mansvelt's death by sword in the hand of our arch enemy, Henry Morgan. There was no mystery about Mansvelt's death (as certain who have made mention of it would have appear), but it was the result of a feud between him and Morgan, and came about in a manner very natural to one engaged in his nefarious calling.

I cannot but confess to a feeling of horror at the occurrence, and—though may God forgive me for questioning his decrees—it would have been in a measure gratifying had I but learned that it was Morgan who had fallen and not Mansvelt.

Immediately after the occurrence Morgan gave orders to throw the body of the late admiral overboard, after which he called the men aft and announced from the castle poop that he was now the admiral of the fleet, and they were to obey his orders. They, of course, said nothing, though many of them were sullen enough, in

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sooth ; for, as compared with their present commander, Mansvelt was tender and compassionate. But might makes right with the buccaneers, and, as Morgan had the command, they could not but fain obey him. His first command was to about ship and seek out Maracaibo, for he had long had the sacking of this rich city in mind, remembering the spoils that Lolonois gained therefrom in his raid of years before.

Arrived at Maracaibo, the buccaneers had exceeded even the cruelties of Lolonois, for they put all the leading citizens whom they could capture to the torture ; they burst out their brains by twisting cords about their heads ; had boiled some of them in oil ; had tortured some others by the rack—in fact, had used all their divelish ingenuity for the purpose of compelling the people of Maracaibo to reveal the hiding-places of their treasures. They had been so far successful in this that Morgan was enriched by millions of pounds' worth of treasure, and, just as the Spanish fleet appeared, he was about de-

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parting for Tortuga with it all. Fortune had favored him, together with the using of the fire-raft, and the rest we knew.

Old[^]Jaques had only just concluded his narration by the break of dawn, and, ere he had ended, the Indian chief had slipped quietly in and requested him to tell it in Spanish that he might understand it. This Jaques did, and, as he concluded, the chief broke forth: "Some of my people were in Maracaibo and were tortured, too, and it is for the sake of them that I now demand revenge!"

CHAPTER XXIII

WHAT BEFELL THE MURDEROUS BUCCANEERS

THE words of the chief startled us somewhat, despite the already harrowing scenes we had passed through of late, but his swarthy face, with its deep-set eyes gleaming like coals of fire in the light of the coming dawn, was yet more startling. We looked at him in some wonder, but no man durst ask him what he meant. At last he spoke, in explanation of his meaning.

“Ye know,” he said, “that some of my people were done to death by torture there in Maracaibo, whither they had gone on a peaceful mission. For we are people of peace and raise our hands against no man unless first he setteth upon us with bad intent. Then we strike and

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have no mercy; for though we are people of peace, and full many a century have dwelt here above the water, in order that we might trespass upon no man's territory, and might live unmolested with our wives and children, yet we are strong and revengeful. Listen now, men who have come here across the sea—ye came to me and I received you gladly, because were ye not my friends? Yea, and with the old man, the Norte Americano, I have had blood friendship these many moons. Now, listen, yet again to what I say: I have been around to all the dwellings within my colony, and I have warned all the strong men and the sturdy women to prepare themselves to assail those bloody bucaniers this coming night. Ah, ye start, ye are amazed, to think that my people dare thus. Is it not so? Yea, but believe me, we will prevail over those men of blood, and, moreover, ye shall sail away in their own vessel, even the galleon that, as you say, they have taken from the Spaniard. I and my people have no love for

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the Spaniards; but at least they have not molested us for many years; while the bucaniers have applied the torture; they have killed some of my tribe. On their heads be the blood they have shed, and with interest manifold. I have done."

And of a truth he had, as he said, done speaking, for we could get no word from him thereafter for many an hour. He had wrought himself up to the fury of speech, as it were, which with such a nature as his required great effort, and having delivered himself he closed his mouth and remained silent, because, forsooth, he had nothing more to say. But he replied to our questions, though in monosyllables only and reluctantly.

During the ensuing day there was great stir among the Lake-Dwellers. The huts swarmed forth Indians big and small, like the pouring out of bees from a hive, and there was such a gathering of canoes hollowed out from trees as never in the world was the like seen before, I

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ween. Within the huts there was a sharpening of weapons—of rusty swords that had been brought to this country by the first *conquistadores*; of spears with triangular heads, of arrows made of fish-bones and others with obsidian points; all which were poisoned with the wurrari from the interior of Guiana where the Carib Indians dwell. This poison is a deadly one, and once entereth it into the veins of a man nothing on earth can save him from the terrible death that followeth hard after the wounding with one of these arrows.

Through the long, hot day there went on great preparation, and as the shadows lengthened along the lake, and the sun dipped toward the horizon, all the Indians dwelling here seemed to be ready for the fray. Ready, yea, and desperately eager, withal.

The women and girls among the Indians had been as busy as the men, getting ready store of provisions, of the which all partook with avidity, especially of their fermented beer, which they

said would give them great strength for the space of the twenty-four hours next ensuing. Acting upon the advice of the chief, we too partook of food and drink, and slept through the heated portion of the day, and by night were refreshed and strengthened. It was a sight the like of which never had I looked upon before—that gathering together of the canoes, each canoe filled with red warriors, naked to the waist, painted in stripes of yellow and black and vermillion, with an effect of hideous oramentation. They seemed more as divels than as men, and for the time being perhaps they may be so called, for they all were in a state of suppressed phrenzy that showed in their excited gestures, in their hoarse, guttural cries, and above all in their gleaming eyes. Perhaps there were half a thousand of them there assembled, and it was with no small degree of pride that the chief regarded his children—as he called the warriors. He turned to us for approval, and we gave him praise without stint; but still we could not but

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feel that even this large number of half-naked warriors was insufficient to encompass our designs and wrest from the buccaneers their ships, or at least one of them.

We would fain have left the ladies here in the hut to rest, the while we were engaged in the expedition; but not only was the chief averse to our doing so, explaining that his entire settlement, including even all the women and children, would accompany the war canoes, leaving the colony without an inhabitant, but the ladies themselves entered energetic protest. So, perforce, they went along, though at the rear end of the procession, and in a boat with some of the Indian women and children. It was in accord with the plan of the chief that all this was arranged, and more wise arrangement could not have been made—as the sequel proved, and shortly, too. Night fell, at last, and, moving with the precision of a fleet that had been drilled by the best of British admirals, the flotilla started for the scene of operations. All through the day a

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pillar of smoke had proclaimed the location of the ships, and the Indian scouts sent out by the chief had from time to time made us aware of the buccaneer's movements. In the main, the scouts reported, they had remained just where they had gained the victory of the night before, repairing damages and sacking the dismantled galleons. They had also been engaged in more bloody work than that—some of them having hung and quartered and tossed overboard for the sharks to eat many of the hapless prisoners. We learned, amongst other things, that the buccaneers who had taken the galleon we had escaped from had hung the rudder, extinguished the flames of the night before, and prepared the ship for a voyage. Also, that all, or nearly all, the Maracaibo treasure had been taken to the galleon, which, together with that she held before, would make a pretty prize for whomsoever might recapture her. When this was explained to the chief, he said he would concentrate all his efforts upon the galleon, and once

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in his possession she should be turned over to us, to go whithersoever we cared, and so long as he and his men had their revenge they would ask for nothing more, only the small boats, the surplus guns, swords, cutlasses, etc., which we might perchance take from the enemy. He had the whole affair so well planned that we could not but wonder, and he felt so positive of victory that we could not feel otherwise than confident ourselves.

Thus it was with the feeling that our battle was already half won that we set forth for the fleet. In short, we arrived in its vicinity about an hour before midnight. Silently, in accordance with the orders previously issued by the chief, the war canoes formed a double circle around the galleon, which we had singled out for attack. Smaller and smaller grew the circle, nearer and nearer drew we to the ship, until the canoes formed almost a solid wall about her. In fact, so well had the plan been made that they enclosed the galleon as with a floating wall of

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hollow logs or trees, but all these logs were swarming with red Indians, ready at the word to leap up the sides of the ship and upon her deck.

Suddenly, without a warning, there darted from out the portholes of the ship a circling sheet of flame, and the water just beyond the canoes was churned into whirlpools and cataracts of foam, where the iron missiles intended for us had struck. The chief chuckled, in his peculiar guttural, for what had happened was just as he had expected and prepared for. That is, he had allowed the canoes to be discovered at the moment he intended, and no sooner. Then, as they were so near that the guns on shipboard could not be sufficiently depressed to hit them with their missiles, we had really drawn the fire of the enemy without encountering any harm.

At the low-spoken word of command, up leaped the Indians, attacking the sides of the ship, to which they clung like barnacles, and entering the portholes, as well as swarming over the bulwarks. There were so many of them

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that the buccaneers were actually overwhelmed, and though they stood to their arms like the brave men they really were, and fought to the last gasp, each man of them, it was all of no avail. The fight was short but fierce. I will not enter into the details of it; suffice that at last there came an end to it, and we remained masters of the ship. Of the buccaneers, some of them formerly our comrades, there was no man left alive on the ship, for the chief of the Lake-Dwellers heeded not our entreaties to be merciful, and either killed all he and his men encountered or drove them into the sea. It was all done so quickly that, almost before we were well aware of the fact, the decks were cleared and the Indians were victorious. No credit to Eli, Jaques and myself, either, for though we were all three burning to take part, the Indians were ahead of us, and that night taught us a lesson in the art of war. I never before saw a ship's deck so quickly cleared of all living opponents, nor so thickly strewn with dead and wounded men

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silently dispatched. Our red allies uttered hardly a sound, except to grunt as they sent home their thrusts of spear or shot a poisoned arrow to its mark. Not many of them were killed, either, so fierce and rapid was their onslaught; but of the enemy more were laid low than I care to think about. Still, they had brought their fate upon themselves, and deserved no other.

When all was over, the chief sent back a scout canoe to carry the tidings to the women, who were lingering behind at an appointed rendezvous, and in an hour or so they came up, silently and swiftly, each canoe paddled by a brawny female; and they, too, as their fathers, brothers and husbands had done but a little while before, swarmed upon the ship and scattered all over it in search of spoil. A hundred lights gleamed here and there—on deck, in the cabin and forecastle and in the hold—and in a short time the busy people were collected at the bulwarks, each man, woman and child laden

with what seemed in their sight most valuable. Clothing and trinkets, jewelry, and especially swords, cutlasses, musquets, arquebuses and pistols, were the articles they prized most; but though we directed their attention to the bags and boxes of silver, tons of which, seemingly, were stored in the hold and in the treasure tanks, they would have none of it.

“No, no,” said the old chief, as we told him to reward himself and his people for their work. “No, no; we no want silver. We have had revenge; that is enough. Take the ship and its treasure and swiftly make away. Already the pirate chief and his men are awake, and soon they will be here, unless ye sail quickly out of the lake into the open sea. Even then he will be at your heels. I have detailed twelve of my men to go with ye. They are good sailors; they know how to manage a galleon like this. They want to see the world. Take them with ye; but some time send them back safe and sound. Already they are at their posts; some have cut

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the cable, some are loosing the sails. Adieu, *amigos*; we thank ye for helping us to take our revenge!"

As he concluded this extraordinary speech he uttered a word of command, and over the ship's sides slid his people, laden as they were, dropping into their canoes like machines, so perfectly did they obey him and so smoothly did they work. Before we had scarce time to thank him for his aid he himself had leaped the bulwark and was off, leaving us staring at each other in amaze.

"By gum!" said Eli, rubbing his eyes with the back of one hand, "ain't he a nectarino? With a few men like him, Hump, my hearty, we could sweep the Caribbean Sea and have the commerce of nations at our mercy. He ought to be a buccaneer, and, if he only knew his power, methinks he would become a leader of the Brethren. Say you not so?"

"Perchance," I answered, dreamily, myself somewhat dazed by events which had succeeded

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in such swift succession. "But it is well he does not care to be more than he is: a mere leader of red men and chief of his little colony. Let us haste to assure ourselves that our ladies are safe and then speed away, as he cautioned us, for the open sea."

I found the señorita and the señora safe in the great cabin, where they had been placed by the Indian women who had them in charge, and watched over by a comely maiden, tawny-hued as to complexion, with lips red as pomegranates and eyes like those of a fawn. The welcome they gave me was more than warm, judged by the cold standard of my countrymen, for they had scarcely seen us since we left the Lake-Dwellers' settlement, and knew not whether we were alive or dead. Both the señora and the señorita threw themselves into my arms, and laughed and cried, so that I knew not what to do.

What could I do, forsooth, but endure their embraces like a stoic; though far from feeling

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like one, I ween, with tears of joy gathering in my eyes and my heart beating hard at the thought of being the recipient of such a greeting. They seemed to regard me as the hero of the occasion ; though, in sooth, I could not allow them to remain in that opinion, but as soon as possible informed them of our common indebtedness to the Indian chief. I felt constrained, also, to tell them of the necessity for immediate action, if we were to escape the clutches of Morgan and the other buccaneers, since there was a great stir on their ships, and no doubt they were already preparing to pursue us.

They promptly released me at this, though the señorita seemed loath to allow me to go again on deck ; saying no word, indeed, but regarding me most pleadingly with her shining eyes. Eli and old Jaques had retired at the first onslaught, deeming discretion the better part of valor, perhaps, and I found them awaiting me on deck. Methought they might taunt me, perchance, and I was steeling myself to meet them manfully ;

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but the only sentence uttered was by Eli, and that was enigmatical. "Ah," he said, with a sigh that seemed to me not feigned, "ah, it is a royal thing to be young. Nobody cares for you and me, Jaques; we 're old."

"*Oui*," answered Jaques, sadly; "but we cannot be young two times"—meaning a second time.

No more words were passed, for action, not speech, was now demanded of us. The galleon was now, thanks to the able manner in which the Indians handled her, ploughing through the water gallantly. The buccaneers had evidently made all necessary repairs and everything was shipshape, save that the decks were encumbered with such dead bodies of the foe as the Indians had not thrown overboard. There was nothing to do but cast those that remained after the others, and this occupation kept us busy for a while.

The night was pitchy dark, but the Indians evidently understood the course to take, being water-born and in their native element. And

well it was, for not a long time passed ere the bustle on the buccaneers' ships increased to a roar; out of the darkness flashed the flame from a gun, and a cannon ball came skipping along in our wake. It was well aimed, but fell short; though not so another that was sent right after it, which passed through the cabin windows with a great noise of smashing glass and buried itself in one of the stanchions.

Shrieks from below informed us that the ladies were awake to their peril; but what could we do but keep right on, trusting to luck and our good ship's speed for escape? Nothing, in sooth; but still we were not inactive. Jaques and Eli, finding the Long Tom—as the cannon mounted on the castle aft was called—to be loaded, aimed it carefully at the point where the last flash had appeared and applied the match.

CHAPTER XXIV

BETTER TO DIE A-FIGHTING THAN BE HANGED

WHEN the Long Tom roared out its salute to the buccaneer ships certes there was a disturbance in their direction, for the ball that sped their way raked one of them fore and aft. This circumstance did not, however, deter them from following after us, and soon we led the van of as pretty a flock of sea-birds as the stars of night e'er shone upon. We led the van, say I, but not by a distance so great as to give us much comfort.

Our Indian sailors ran over the ship and scampered up and down the rigging like monkeys, or rather like good-natured demons, and were the best seafarers we had ever known. "By my sooth," said Eli to old Jaques, and with

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me a-standing by, "by my sooth, but these red salvages surpass by far any lubber of a buccaneer my eyes e'er sat upon. I 'gin to hope we may yet escape, my friends."

"*Oui, oui,*" assented old Jaques, readily, "zey is ze *diable pour* zis work. Eef we make ze aiscape it will be onlee by ze aid of ze *sauvages, pour* ze sheep (ship) she ees no so mooch fastair zan ze boucanier."

"Fact, for true," muttered Eli, shifting his glance astern and then aloft at our bellying sails. "Seems t' me if we can't give 'em the slip, somehow, we're goners, sure 's preaching, for we can't possibly beat 'em by straight sailing. That 's plain 's the nose on my face. Here, you!" he called out to the head man of the Lake-Dwellers, as he darted by on the run. Then he put the question to him. "Is there a side channel we can slip into and baffle our pursuers?" Rather, he uttered it not aloud, but by dumb show made the salvage understand his meaning, by merely jerking his thumb over his shoulder and wig-

wagging his head. The Indian understood him well, and at once spread out his hand deprecatingly, as if to say there was none such. Then he swept the sea with a comprehensive wave of his arms, to indicate that the chase was to be a stern chase and to the bitter end. Then he placed both his hands on Eli's shoulders, and, wheeling him about—for he was at that time looking forward—conducted him to the big gun, patted it approvingly and pointed at the lights of our pursuers, shining through the gloom of night. Having done all this, he smiled meaningly into the old buccaneer's eyes, turned on his naked heel and disappeared. It was all done like a flash, or like a succession of flashes, and without uttering a word; but we understood.

“By the big horn spoon!” ejaculated Eli, admiringly. “Ain't he jest the all-fireddest skipper that you ever see? He did n't lose a second, did he? But he showed us as plain as daylight that there wa' n't nothing to do but draw a straight streak for Tortuga, and that while he

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and his men sailed the ship we must defend it."

"And we will, too, by the jumping, green-eyed grasshopper! What we here for but to fight, I'd like to know? What else can we do but fight? Nothing, and we know it. But it's a blamed sight better for us to die a-fighting than be hanged at the yardarm, ain't it? For that's jest what it amounts to if we're taken, sure's preaching. That is, if there's anything left of us after they've done with the torture—the rack and the thumb-screws, the slow fire, the pine splinters, and such like. 'T ain't nice to think of, but that's jest what awaits us if we allow ourselves to be took."

"Ver' well; zen we not allow it, *non*," said Jaques, nodding his head emphatically.

"We may be taken," I added, "but not alive."

"Not alive!" echoed Jaques and Eli. Then we loaded up the big gun, lighted the slow-match and stood ready to fire it when best oc-

easion offered. There were other guns, of course: culverins and demi-culverins in the broadside batteries, but we could not fire them without broaching to or falling off, and hence losing precious time. So upon the Long Tom depended our salvation, perchance we were in danger of being overhauled. All through the remainder of the night we stood by the gun, taking watch and watch, one off at a time for sleep and two on.

The dawn of morning found us in the Caribbean Sea and heading a northerly course for the isle of Tortuga. A short gunshot astern was the foremost of our three pursuers, with the second and the third close after her. We knew, from the dogged manner in which they held their course, so persistently and silently, without e'er losing a moment to essay a shot at us, that the master of each vessel had instructions to take us alive, and for what purpose—to be tortured, to wit—we knew full well.

Shortly after daylight broke, the señorita

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came on deck, and made directly for the gun where I was standing. I saw her not, for at that moment occurred the chance for which I had been watching since the dawning, viz., the foremost vessel yawed widely from her course, with the slant of her bows presenting a most fair mark for my aim. I could scarce refrain from shouting for joy, as I ran my eye over the breech of my gun and applied the match to the vent. And the big iron ball went straight for the mark, striking the doomed ship well 'twixt wind and water. It must have loosened some planks, I trow, for there seemed to be an immediate inrush of water. The vessel shivered like a whale struck by a lance, and eftsoon was down by the head and evidently a-sinking, with immense confusion manifest on board.

“Hit her that time! She’s a goner, sure’s fighting!” shouted Eli, who had been asleep under the taffrail, and was awakened by the shot. “That’s give us a chance to leave ’em all hull down before this day is ended, and by

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evening of the next we ought to sight Tortuga."

Turning around, I met the señorita's gaze fixed full upon me, and in her great black eyes such soulful admiration that my cheeks went hot and red with the blood that rushed into them. Were there no other reward than her praise, I would have gone through flood and fire to win that praise.

"Nobly done, friend Humphrey," she said, extending her hand. "Another shot like that and I shall feel quite sure of seeing my dear kin again."

"That you shall do, I trust, and soon, whatever betide," I answered. "See, our noble sailors have every sail set and drawing, and look at the wake of foam behind our rudder."

"Yes, and look at the pirate ship you shot at," she rejoined. "Truly, the waves all but break over her; only the castle top is clear of them. Ah, that too is plunging under. Yes, and the masts careen. Look! Look quickly,

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for the ship is about to plunge into its ocean grave!”

And it was even so. Hardly had she finished ere the sea had closed over the vessel.

“But two now are left,” she said. “Will those pursue us?”

“Till the death,” I answered, looking at her steadily.

“And will they catch us?”

“I do not know, but trow not.”

“But if they catch us, Humphrey. If they do?”

She clutched me by the sleeve. Her eyes dilated. I saw in them the look that once before I beheld when she made me promise to kill her rather than allow her to be taken by the pirates.

“They must not; they shall not!” I exclaimed, passionately. “Rather than that we will drive our vessel under water and all go down together; we will scuttle and sink her before their very eyes.”

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"That will do, friend Humphrey. Better that than be taken. But not till the last moment, though. I do so want to see my papa and my sister."

"And you shall," I answered her, "if it lies in us to accomplish it."

"I am content, dear friend," she replied most sweetly, as if I had promised her a gift already within my grasp. "I know that you and these good men will do all that lies within the power of men to do."

And, sooth, so did we. Suffice it that the third afternoon we sighted the cliffs of Tortuga, and at the same time the two remaining pirate ships also hove in view, still keeping in our wake and still determined to make us prisoners. Now, Eli and old Jaques and I had talked it over seriously, and made resolve to touch in at Tortuga, e'en had we to risk our very lives for it. But how to do it, and how to apprise our friends there in waiting of our coming and have them ready, was the problem. Every hour, yea, every

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moment, was now most precious, for not long would it take the pirate vessels to overhaul us, sailing as they were.

I then recalled that at parting I had said to John, half jestingly as it were, "Perchance I can escape these pirates, I will return in my own ship and take thee off to our own country; but thou must be ready."

"And what shall be the signal?" he queried, fully believing me capable of any adventure, be it never so great. It must be remembered that it was at the setting out of the expedition for Porto Bello that we had this conversation, and nothing in the world seemed less likely than that I should ever return in my own ship, scarce indeed return at all. Yet here I was, if not in my own ship, at least in one that was under my command. And I then recalled that I had said: "John, keep thine ears open for three signal guns, at minute intervals, and when thou hearest them haste thee to the shore with all thy belongings, for I shall then be off the har-

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bor, and perchance there may be an enemy in pursuit, and no time to waste."

And it was agreed that we would chance it on John's recalling this pact between us and fire the guns, peradventure he would heed the signal and haste from the cave to the harbor, where we might take him, and whomsoever might be with him, on the voyage with as small delay as possible. And so we did. We fired three culverins of the starboard battery, at minute intervals, as we rounded the point and sighted the opening to the harbor. But, reader, our hearts were in our throats, as it were, for fear he would not hear, or, hearing, heed not the signal; for the pirate vessels were in full chase, and no great distance separated us by this. To sail into the harbor would be to entrap ourselves for the pirates' pleasure, for of a verity there would not be time to pick up our passengers and sail out again. This was why our hearts were in our throats as we made the entrance to the channel and swept the shore with our telescopic glasses,

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hoping we might see our friends. No one was in sight upon the strand. All was desolate, apparently, and our hearts sank as we turned and gazed each into the others' faces. But suddenly an Indian on the watch at the mast-head shouted out: "*Un buque, un buque!*"—"A boat, a boat!" And there it was, in the centre of the harbor, having been hidden from our view by a protruding coral reef, and in the boat—ah, yes, who were those in the boat? They might be friends, they might be enemies; but there were four, just the number of our friends whom we had left in the cave. And the señorita's eyes, sharpened perchance by love, saw that two of them were those she was so longing for to behold, and cried out, and threw her arms around my shoulders, where her lovely head sank for the space of a moment, so overcome was she with joy and a-trembling with the shock of it.

So we stood off and on at the harbor mouth, and eventually the boat came up with us. We cast them a rope, drew them aboard without

much ado, and after them their boat, in sooth, and then shook out our sails and sped away again. This delay, short as it was, had enabled the pirate vessels to gain the channel entrance, or quite near to it, so there seemed a fight on our hands at once. But we had a heart for it now, for we had on board the ones for whom we had risked so much, and one-half the battle was won. Yet was our cruise barely begun, for there was nothing for it now but to undertake the long voyage for Spain.

“*España! España!*” shouted the sailors—“to Spain, to Spain”—as the galleon swung around and leaped forward on her course. But there lay the enemy, right in the road—to wit, the pirate vessels, one each side the channel—and Spain yet thousands of miles away!

“Drive her straight ahead,” shouted Eli to the helmsman, and, though he may not have understood the language, the Indian knew just what was wanted. The galleon went lumbering through the channel midway, deviating no whit.

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“Man the batteries!” yelled Eli, and most of us, including two of the new arrivals and three of the crew, ranged ourselves on each side the ship. The culverins were not large and they were old, but they were loaded to the muzzle, and we resolved to give the pirates some parting shots, e’en went we down to the bottom of the sea immediately after. Each of us held a lighted match, and at the word, “Starboard battery,” from Eli, out spake the culverins most bravely, their roar being followed by the crashing of timbers as the shots went home. The larboard battery followed, with the same result; but by now the enemy found his tongue and came barking back at us, evidently resolved that the chance for capturing us was a fleeting one, and to sink us was the only recourse now. Both pirate vessels plied their guns most rapidly and the galleon was well peppered; but there were no casualties among our crew. As we drew ahead and brought our stern gun to bear we gave



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"WE CAST THEM A ROPE."

See p. 364.

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them better than they sent, and so held them in check until quite out of range.

“Guess they won’t foller us any further,” said Eli, watching the splashes in the water astern, growing less frequent and further off at each report. “Them fellers know when they ’ve had enough, and they ain’t hankering for any more, jest let me tell you, Hump. Go aft now and greet your friends; for sooth, you hain’t even said a word to John or the Don, let alone the lovely señoritas.”

So I sought the castle-cabin, where I found the Don and John had recently preceded me, and there had my reward, yea, and much more, in the way of thanks than I was entitled to. Events had pressed upon us so quickly at the coming aboard of our friends that I had not had a chance to speak to any one of them, but now that the great peril was passed there was ample time for conversation, had we been so minded. John rushed into my arms at once I appeared in the cabin, forestalling the Don, who was not

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to be thus outdone and embraced us both. Then he took me by the hand and led me in front of his daughters, who were yet locked in each other's arms and bestowing mutual caresses.

It mattereth not what the Don said nor what the señoritas said and did, for in the excess of their gratitude they ascribed to me their salvation from the pirates; though I protested that but for Eli and old Jaques all my efforts might have come to naught. It was Eli who planned and Jaques and I who but assisted, and I was fain to go in search of my friends to have them share the honors with me—which they flatly refused to do.

“We hain’t done nothing more ’n our duty,” declared Eli, and Jaques assented with a “*Oui*, zat is all, eet was a plaisir to die for ze charming ladies, and yet we not have zat plaisir. Zey owe us nozings.”

Still, the Don and his daughters were not to be appeased by our protestations. They insisted that we should go with them to their castle at

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Ronda and stay there with them for at least a year; but Eli and Jaques declared this to be impossible, for they had the ship and the Indian sailors to care for. Arrived at the white-walled city of Cadiz, however—which port we made in due season, thanks to the Indians, who sailed the galleon with their wonted skill—John and I finally assented to accompany the *Del Mars* to their castle. First, however, we had to arrange with the Lake-Dwellers to stay by the galleon until the salvages on it were adjusted, the king's fifth of the treasure exacted, and all claims paid. After the aforesaid king's fifth—as it was called—of the treasure aboard was taken out there remained a goodly sum represented by perhaps two hundred thousand pounds, which fell due to myself, John, Eli and Jaques, as virtually the salvors of the ship and contents. This we agreed to divide equally, after paying to the Indians what share they might demand—they having saved the ship—leaving to each of us not less than thirty thousand pounds apiece.

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I had almost forgotten to mention what John confided to me: to wit, that he and the Don had amused themselves during our absence on the Porto Bello expedition in searching out the hiding-places of the buccaneers' treasure on the island of Tortuga, and had accumulated, probably, to the value of at least two million pounds, which they had secreted in the cave. Before leaving Tortuga, even in the haste of departure, which allowed them scarce time to gather a few essential things together, John had bethought himself to close and conceal the exit from the cave, so that it was as good as sealed up, against the time when we might, perchance, return and break it open.

"And, Humphrey, we will some time return for that treasure, will we not?" John frequently plead with me. To which I answered full oft, "In God's time." And in sooth we did return, a year later, in the galleon, which the Court of Claims adjudged to belong to us by right of capture; and, by the aid of the Indian sailors,

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made a most successful voyage, full of wonderful adventures. We found the treasure in the cave, of a verity, and we found other things ; but not to be narrated here, as I feel this my story should be nearing its end.

Suffice it that, after the court at Cadiz had released our ship and declared us true friends of Spain and entitled to high rewards for our services against her enemies, the buccaneers, John and I set off with the *Del Mars* for their castle, which is situate at Ronda, in the erstwhile Moorish country of Spain, amid the crags and hills.

And it is here, after many years, in my room in the high tower of the castle, that I have indited this my narrative of strange adventures whilst I was perforce a buccaneer. There be, doubtless, many defects in it, since my hand is not given to the setting down of what my brain conceives, and if at times I have been rambling and disjointed in my narrative, dear reader (perchance there ever be one), kindly ascribe it to the proper cause, viz.: the writer's lack of skill.

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I would fain have treated more at length of my dear brother by adoption, John, and detail whatever happened to him while he had that wearisome waiting in the cave; but it hath so fallen out that the story hath shaped itself as it is herewith given, and I cannot change it without much painful overhauling. It seemeth to me a curious happening that we were thrown together, as we were, into the company of those men of blood, the buccaneers, and obliged to pass through scenes foreign to any we would have chosen,—to recall which, e'en now, causeth me to shudder at the recollection. But, whatever betide me in the future, I know that both past and future are the ordering of God, who, in His wise foreknowledge, maketh man an instrument for the shaping of His plans.

